

Nessy Cohen y Claudia Mazzucchelli

Ser antena

By SANTIAGO VILLANUEVA

Our framework is constituted by genealogies that are possible as well as invented ones, affiliations with variations of form and character. Most often, they begin with a coincidence, or an unplanned encounter, but they tend to make up a transitory band that somehow narrates a moment or an era in art. Nessy and Claudia's work pertains to this way of understanding things. They sustain the idea of transmission, of having and looking after a master, because that way, art history can be slowed down, it can be made a time of one's own, rather than just one more demand.

This exhibition revisits one they held in 1993 at the Casal de Catalunya in Buenos Aires titled *La visión suspendida* (Suspended Vision), in which Juan Batlle Planas, Roberto Aizenberg, Nicolás Guagnini, Nessy Cohen, Claudia Mazzucchelli, Roberto Pazos and Agustín Soibelman participated, with a text by Fabiana Barreda. Cohen-Mazzucchelli's work was not part of a collective project then, but there were intersections, mixes, resemblances and differences that began to emerge as an early indication of what would materialize later, while they were living in Mallorca and collaborating on murals, to finally be confirmed in a joint signature in 2014, when a series of 15 of their works, 33 x 41 cm each and dedicated to Alejandro Urdapilleta, were exhibited at Magdalena Jitrik's studio.

The text that follows borrows its format from one that Aida Carballo wrote in the background of her *Autoretrato con autobiografía* (Self Portrait with Autobiography) from 1973. It is composed on the basis of notes, audio transcriptions, talks, excerpts from other texts and exchanges during the last months with Nessy and Claudia. It is a floating biography, one that conjugates an intersection between two manners and a possible third.

They meet during the time when Nessy had the studio on Belaustegui street, during the first and second courses at the Cárcova¹, where they were both attending open studio classes. During the second year, they sign up together to study with Roberto (Bobby) Aizenberg. At that studio on Belaustegui, a temporal delirium takes place:

works with character, the move from the studio in the bedroom to a studio of one's own, with spacious dimensions. The chorizo [colonial style] house, with a hallway running through to the rear. Nessy used to work at the Parque de la Ciudad on weekends to be able to study; he used to run the park rides at Interama². In 1985, the night classes in the Cárcova's cultural outreach program were held in spaces distributed around a patio; Claudia crossed it to visit a girlfriend, and there was Nessy. He used to visit her at Bénédict's studio, she would do so at Roux's.

Night classes with Bobby, 1986, a pandemonium. Bobby was a totem, with mandarin collar shirts and impeccable suits, always very calm and smiling. One day, in 1990, they grab a stretcher, "let's make a painting together", a consequential delirium. At that studio on Belaustegui, Nessy painted the [album] cover for Don Cornelio³, among so many others; he went to live in the burned out house that belonged to his parents in Moreno: empty, with a pool and a yard, a studio. In 1992, Nessy had his first solo show at Galería Vermeer. They are active on the art scene, the effervescence of the era is just beginning. The works with heads are from that show, along with some figures.

Claudia had been working on paintings related to old family photos of the immigrants in her family since 1991, and then she began to make portraits without anyone posing for them or realizing what she was doing; she would mention it to the model once the work was finished. She had done a portrait of Palo Pandolfo and Nicolás Guagnini. She was influenced by surrealist painter Max Ernst and the portraits by [Diego] Rivera. There is a group portrait by Max Ernst with a lot of artists, and that was her inspiration. Featuring in hers are: her father, Fernando Trocca, [Guillermo] Iuso, Guagnini, Res, Bobby, Nessy, Roberto Pazos, [Humberto] Tortonese and Urdapilleta. Claudia had her studio in Martínez, and Nessy, in Moreno. They visit each other back and forth. The first work they collaborate on is a very small one: they would do a lot of paintings in miniature, in small format. Nessy grabs a little painting that Claudia was painting and paints on top, she paints, he paints, and they continue it. Oil provides that opportunity. It's the first one they sign jointly. There's a continual play that is humor, not mockery: a collage by a couple at play, elements that come from different universes

and meet in a single place, working with the simple and immediate. Painting together is a collaboration that produces pleasure and conflict at the same time. Speaking is in plural, or by an other: a borderline experience, in color, in the abstract relation to borders, and on the border of their own selves.

Bobby gives a lecture on the opening day of the course at the Pueyrredón⁴, and he begins by launching the phrase: "Everything that was done prior to Les Demoiselles d'Avignon is publicity and propaganda". People grabbed their heads with their hands and they began to argue. When they finish the first year of the program, they ask him to invite them to his studio on Brasil street. Bobby had only recently returned from Europe; his studio was at the back of the house and everything was impeccable, a laboratory. As Bobby used to say: we are antennas. Aizenberg influences the craft, the quality, the conversations. He is far removed from the mainstream; on the opposite side of the street: the transavantgarde. That had nothing to do with them: they were fine brushes, oils, the Flemish. Bobby was not at all in fashion, he didn't do well economically, places didn't open their doors to him, and they stayed by his side. He didn't participate in competitions, shows or retrospectives. Aizenberg was a refuge, with that way of seeing the artist's stoicism, in the studio making their work; Bobby's idea was that we are antennas that receive information, and we bring it down, later it must be seen, contemplated: suspended vision is just that... He gave them order. Fascination. He took away their foolishness, their arrogance, their preoccupation over whether or not they were accepted. It was the realization that they were working automatically, that the painting's direction and analysis were posterior: there was an execution and a method of execution. That is the inheritance Bobby passed on to them: to achieve the greatest effect with the least amount of energy possible. A formal part inherited: order, agility, being careful, love for the work, giving it time. Oil obligates you to do so. And the passion for drawing: drawing as an antenna, or the superfinished drawing. Bobby didn't want them to follow his line; he was there for an evolution. They began to influence him. In 1990, his partner, Matilde Herrera, dies, and Bobby falls into depression. He winds up buying the floor above him, afraid of someone moving in and of hearing their footsteps above his head, and there he begins to offer classes. Nussy and Guagnini are his assistants. Bobby's classes were classes in automatism, with people of all ages. Nussy would take his work to his

studio and he would give corrections, pointing out with his finger: "this is excess, this should be changed, I think". Works were subjected to analysis, the day to day stuff of painting. When Nussy was working as his assistant, he would take off the excess paint with a razor blade. The series he painted when Matilde dies is when the Israeli Embassy was blown up, and nothing was left. He titled it Homenaje (Homage). Their reading of the master continued, they followed from that point on, they didn't linger in the past, but continued what he was unable to finish. He transmitted to them what Battle Planas had, in part, already given to him. We are antennas, Battle had said to him, and he said so to Nussy and to Claudia.

When they put the La visión suspendida show together, they and Guagnini begin to fantasize. The Casal de Catalunya had appeared then, and they organize a show there. Aizenberg lends them work, the Galería Vermeer and a collector lend them works by Battle Planas. They go by car with Nicolás to pick them up. It was a show on the margins of what was going on then. An antenna show. A vague protagonist of the era, with no pretensions. It was slow painting, an inheritance divided into pieces, the projection and continuity of other artists, responsibility for the legacy and taking a certain distance. For a show of Nussy's works, Palo Pandolfo speaks about "frequencies, a negation of anything, a pagan, ritual theater curtain, a solitary smile", and this, in addition to sustaining one manner and inventing others. Other possibilities for the same thing. Metaphysics and surrealism. A place that is shared..

1 Translator's note: Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes Ernesto de la Cárcova, national university for post-graduate studies in art.

2 Translator's note: Parque Interama was a theme park in Buenos Aires' Parque de la Ciudad.

3 Translator's note: Don Cornelio y La Zona was a rock band and the name of their debut album.

4 Translator's note: Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón, the national fine arts university.



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