

Conversation between Valentina Liernur and Gallery Le Bourgeois (02/05/18-)

LB - Hi Valentina. We wanted to ask you about how this series of paintings were first conceived?

VL - The original idea was to work on a series that would add as a layer to the other exhibitions I had done at Campoli Presti gallery. Thinking long term narratives as in fashion shifts of shape and line...Those two exhibitions were mainly abstract, but one had a big drawing that acted as a kind of unconscious leaking of some other series intermingled.

This one started with an oversized fanart style drawing of pregnant Kim Kardashian rotating on the surface of the canvas as a kind of reproduction spiral machine capitalising on every second of her time and body. Then I followed with some other female characters in different body-language gestures. The ones here now were meant to all hang in a room like flat characters of a theatre play.

I wanted to hang them close to other abstract works with cheap symbolic and material references to punk that I had already used before as in a kind of zombie Arte Povera/folk art.

LB - The works here have now been sliced into various segments. We spoke about this as being a kind of faux-angsty repost to the suspension of the exhibition they were originally produced for. It also somehow has the effect of underlining the flat/graphic decorative aspect - the McDonalds art aspect! Was this a cathartic experience? And have you always been interested in this type of graphic/conceptual flatness?

VL - Yes, true, in December I got an invite from Luiz Roque to show with him some stuff in Buenos Aires (at Isla Flontante) and here after Merlin put us in contact, the slicing came after this and had this kind of emotional patina that also made sense with the flat style drawings, the cheap punk references and this past series I've done cutting ripping bleaching. And how painterly a release at the level of the surface is. But also making two exhibitions out of one - I had really no time to produce anything new- and a functional purpose: fit the works in our suitcases

I think there is no way out of that flatness you mention. It is to a certain degree an infernal death trap condition. I'm interested in the afterlife of a painting as a backdrop for this other thing that is meant to happen in space.

LB - Yes, also you talked about wanting to make very big paintings as a response to the difficulty in finding a suitable studio situation and the premium the art market puts on easily displayable medium sized works. So the works have gone through a strange process of shifting scale and context. This makes us think of the digital manipulation of jpegs and in particular the location filters used by Instagram we spoke about - Would you say the work references this type of image reproduction?

VL - One of the first impulses of the big format 200x200cm was against this format filters applied by the market. It wasn't specifically the size but more the idea to send them already stretched. I didn't want to end up shipping another roll of paintings that had to be painted in very thin layers to travel safe or end up doing just maximum 160 cm wide paintings because of the local canvas production limits. I did a triptych that was six meters putting together three works sized at 200 x 200cm. It was a copy of a huge Tapiés abstract work in black and white oil with one of this drawings shown here in between (I had worked previously using some of his paintings as references) But this was rejected. The reasons for something to be accepted as big or small, a kind of filter, are at urgent times on the other side of the line. And this also has to do with what a latinoamerican artist still living in latinoamerica should be doing, to keep visible. We are all definitely caught up under location filters and it's almost impossible not to do be doing folk art. I don't really know where to place all this anecdotes more than in a sort of dadaist way of assembling them back together.

LB - The figuration in the show derives from fashion magazines and functions symbolically in various ways. You said that in hindsight there were coded references to motherhood and child-birth that have appeared. Is there a relevant link here between the death drive, eternity, and motherhood?

VL - Yes, they were a mix of fashion magazines and classic painting postures like the one of a Prada by Steven Meisel/Mary Magdalene in Penitence by Greco/Portrait of a Lady by Veronese with a sort of Burberry background. It's obviously an empty hand on chest gesture very similar to a safety pin reference. It is there just reflecting.

I did this work right after having a daughter but I had not really a clear intention of using this as central topic. I mean the Kim rotating machine was an obvious joke on infinite reproduction and eternity search but then the open flys, the flower, the body hanging on the purse...the emo slicing of rejected works in order to become new ones where all...kind of unconscious zombie reproductive leaks that could also refer to other stuff. Very painterly very the medium is the link very painting is death and eternal reproduction...

There is in painting at least for me something of this endless devotion described as maternal by Maggie Nelson in the Argonauts...

LB - You mentioned Arte Povera and a particular generation of South American artists in the 90's being influential. We also spoke about a local art world politics in Argentina that calls for a deferential attitude and frowns upon internationalism. How do you feel about these relations and being on the inside/outside of various contexts?

VL - Yes, this big 90s anti international is a kind of filter one can use or be used by here in BsAs. There is a lot of great work done also in this "povera" condition, a lot of amazing pop-graphic-decorative kind of art. It was great that you had the chance to see this O. Schiliro show when you came to pick up the works here in BsAs.

how I feel..lol

I feel confused and no way out of misunderstandings, constant adding layers, constant shift of how to look at stuff, changing scenarios, the feeling of being lost, being late, out, in, etc. Inside a baroque spiral. But the thing is all of this is a driving force. When I showed the works after the cancellation at my studio in São Paulo the same day the opening in London should have happened there was a lot of stuff that I had meant as a joke at a specific scenario like a London white cube that was taken seriously because of being at my Sao Paulo studio or stuff that I meant as serious that was dismissed. It was like a pulling the rug kind of blooper. I had a very strange feeling but then again a sort of joy in confusion as a short moment out of flatness...

LB - The attitude here tends towards one of refusal or an acceptance of the limitations of what might be attempted in a painting. Could this relate to coming from a position of relative subordination in being a female painter from Buenos Aires?

VL - Yes refusal and acceptance of imposed limiting filters for this triad painting-identity-location were always a contradicting driving force.

LB - You described the way that most Argentinian artists leave and do not return - in your case you've tended to resist familiar art world epicentres. Do you ever suffer from fomo? Does this matter?

VL - Fomo is constant and expanding. more since I'm a mother. I wish I could be hanging out here-there tonight. But all of this I think doesn't matter actually and there is no difference for me at the moment between being somewhere irl or home watching pictures. I have inverted fomo, I think friends should come visit more.