

Ana Baumann | *Las Otras* | April 1 - 29, 2022
Sharp Projects | Blegdamsvej 38 | Copenhagen, DK 2200

Las | The (article, feminine, plural, Spanish)

Otras | Others (adjective, feminine, plural, Spanish)

Las Otras is Ana Baumann's first solo exhibition inside her new hometown, Copenhagen (s.2020), outside her original hometown, Asunción (b.1986). Her body, her knowledge and her practice have inhabited several geographies since she studied Cinematography and Photography in Buenos Aires, continuing her training in New York and relocating to Asunción, where she combined personal visual art projects expanding to urban interventions, installation and performance, with curatorial and coordination practices associated to culture institutions and artist-run spaces.

This exhibition showcases a new body of work featuring photography and a video installation realized since her arrival in this new context. Despite the apparently controlled nature of this editorial support, both works on display — the photography series “**Untitled**”, and the participatory video performance “**Rouge**”—, embrace a choreography of displacement which hints closer to a movement research than a material one. These works offer themselves as plastic pathways where the artist (re)frames concepts that have migrated with her from previous investigations on memory, territory and confinement. However, this resettling exercise triggered new questions on authenticity, origin, and the economy surrounding mobility which surfaced inside a different scale (intimate, autobiographical), and material approach (somatic, experimenting with her own naked body).

“**Untitled**” is a photography series where Ana Baumann used her Fujifilm instant camera (which she normally used to document preliminary research phases of past projects), as a self-ethnographic device with ritualistic properties. Four months after arriving in Copenhagen, in the middle of the lockdown, the artist stages an intimate situation to welcome her own body into her new home, shared with her Danish partner. The seemingly playful strategy to flirt with her anatomy as a naked landscape to be explored, turned suddenly into a trap, hunted by a surrogate fantasy of control. Using what she had at hand, make-up, she began by concealing the fragments of herself until the images turned almost unrecognizable. This intuitive gesture of self erasure as self protection lies at the core of the somatic research on display now at the *Las Otras* exhibition, aiming at creating a re-signified body grammar through an expanded choreographic gesture engaging other bodies in order to form a dance of resistance.

Resistance to bodies becoming commodities in a patriarchal economy that reads femininity as reproductive life vessels are basic gestures accelerated and pushed to their limits in the participatory video performance “**Rouge**”. For this piece the artist addressed a text with a series of instructions to a circle of first contacts: other Latino women friends and colleagues residents in Copenhagen in the range of 25 to 35 years old. The investigation is centered in the works of feminist artists from around the world, with a special focus on the political body and Paraguayan's women's history, who haven't been granted a real space of agency in Paraguayan society despite the glorification of their procreating role as re-builders of the country after the War of the Tripple Alliance (Paraguayan War, 1864-1870). Influenced by the works of Claudia Casarino¹ and Mónica González², who regard the female body as a collective construction/totem, Baumann creates a choreography for camera “reflecting on self-criticism, the freedom of the body, the vindication of the senses and, the complexity of sexuality”. Interested in working with each performer's private environment, “Rouge” becomes a catalogue of domestic interiors tailored by women/performers preparing to welcome a significant other: “a space that is orderly, clean and neat”. A durational conversation formatted as home visits, places the emphasis on the circularity of a seemingly absurd action, where the host/performer would “mark their body in circles in the uncovered stomach/belly area with a red lipstick, while spinning around a designated area”. Performers would then “bring their own thoughts, experiences and actions to the limit. Over the course of the performance each person shall try to spin faster and faster while trying to maintain control”. Placing her tripod in the pre-agreed spot, after selecting the clothing women felt they most identified with, Baumann's presence triggered reflections on “the spectator, questioning how we look and/or how we are looked at”.

This shift of context, of point of enunciation and gaze, moved the focus of attention from a previous practice that linked Baumann with a tradition of Latin American women reappropriating public space (*Cartographies of Disobedience*³); towards a genealogy of Latin American women artists in the diaspora who regard their own body as a territory (semiotic/symbolic). Both genealogies root in different creative strategies that aim to activate our political imagination, to challenge the limits of

¹ “Pynandi (ni puta, ni diosa, ni reina) | Barefoot (not a whore, neither a goddess, nor queen)”, 2010. Sculpture

² “Mujer, pilar, malabarista”. 1992. Installation

³ Ana Baumann: *Cartographies of Disobedience*. Juan de Salazar Spanish Culture Center in Asunción, Paraguay, 2017-2020.

nation states, to rethink their role, to question their cracks, their failures, their voids, and the violence implicit in a system of governance that favors some powerful bodies over some other powerless bodies.

Women artists joined the wave of performance art in Latin America since the 60's following the ideological legacy of the so called "Arte de acción (*actionism*)" and "Didactics of Liberation"⁴, as a reaction to a post war context of tiredness towards speeches, using their bodies, how it expresses and how it modifies through different media strategies to enter spaces, to draw attention to them, to concentrate on their identities. Either by embodying situations (Tania Bruguera) or other person's lives (Regina Galindo), many of these creative strategies came to transform the role of the spectator into actors, creating no space for the disengagement of the gaze as an attitude that reversed how the world looked at them (Ana Mendieta).

As Cuban/North American curator and researcher Marivi Véliz points out: "*All migratory experiences entail silences, and absences. At an inner level, a process takes place when one is leaving a context, the new context becomes a blank page where one reassesses what to keep or not to keep from their own context... A migrant disappears from speech, and reformulates their identities. You can disappear from yourself. Absence means that you don't have a mirror*"⁵.

In this light, it appears to me *AS IF* one could see this exhibition as inhabiting a hall of mirrors. As in that poem of Mallarmé, "*A throw of the dice (will never abolish chance)*". Thinking about the space of writing as a choreography, and prioritizing silences and pauses, this new body of work spreads across the two floors of the gallery space, delivering itself of its absurd character. The title "*Las Otras*" is a mirror because it echoes a gesture by which the artist camouflages-protects herself in the reflection of others - *women, migrants, performers*, to reveal herself in the skin of that same mirror as a woman, a migrant, a performer. Mirroring occurs where the dislocation of a gesture through its repetition, its acceleration, navigates to a new meaning of the world, a new readability, hoisted on the scale of the cosmos. A cosmos which is held by a feminist space of remembering (for those bodies and fights silenced by history), a space of representation (for those bodies rendered invisible), a space of occupation (against a patriarchal culture where some men sustain the continuity of history as a violent space perpetuating privileges granted to them by force of a natural law that mirrors in legal, moral and biological categories of thought, thus creating categories of existence).

WILL ABOLISH

AS IF

An insinuation

in the silence

in some close

*acrobatics*⁶

From gesture as a space of resistance, Baumann engages in a game of triangulation of oblique gazes as a shared dialectic exercise of feminist thought, of memory; as an act of collective writing that goes back to what the Western eye has already seen, so as to remove the inertia of an over visualization. This is what escapes from a synthesis, what enables the authentic otherness. It recalls Saramago's insistence (*Essay on Blindness*) on the dangers and consequences of no longer looking at reality or, what is worse, of thinking that because one has eyes it is possible to look, thus imposing the need to confront from another place this blindness that has been installed in the eye that looks.

Paz Ponce Pérez-Bustamante
(Berlin-based interdependent curator, writer and researcher)

Works List:

"Untitled" Series. 2022, Fujifilm Instax Mini, Make-up. 8,6 x 5,4 cm. ea.

"Untitled" Series. 2020, Fujifilm Instax Mini, Make-up. 8,6 x 5,4 cm. ea.

"Rouge", 2020-2021, Multi-channel video-performance installation, Sound, Dimensions variable

⁴ Camnitzer, Luis (2007): *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture)*.

⁵ Véliz, Marivi (2022): "Absentees. Some Effects of Violence in Latin American Performance Art in the 21st Century" (workshop) | "Women to Power. Art, Politics and Migration in Regina José Galindo and Tania Bruguera" (Lecture). Held on 18.03.22, at nGbK Berlin.

⁶ Mallarmé, Stéphane (1897): *A THROW OF THE DICE NEVER WILL ABOLISH CHANCE*. Excerpt from the poem.