

The solid drawing

La piedra de la locura is a work composed of a variable number of figures that look like fragments of brain mass, which have been elaborated by reproducing a full-scale model of the human brain, a detailed model of those used for anatomical studies. The figures are made in pure agglomerated graphite; therefore they can be considered solid drawings, but they are also, literally, pencils.

This revealing paradox beats in the exhibition “Los móviles y el dibujo”, where Laura Mesa (Tenerife, 1975) presents her inquiries into the problem of representation. The artist has worked with the rhetorical devices of drawing, traditionally considered the most direct medium between thought and its image. Speculating on this idea, she has reduced drawing to a kind of distillation of its technical elements to make a collection of images of the image that can be considered the standardized representation of thought: a human brain. The brain seems an eloquent and obvious icon, but it is also a metaphor not without complexity. Conventional images of the brain are graphic syntheses devised to allow us to understand what is in reality a complex viscous mass of organic tissue. Therefore, this organ, as we conceive it visually, is already a representation in itself. Moreover, the brain is not defined by its physical matter, but by the mental processes it houses, which are essentially connections of an electrical nature, and therefore immaterial. Therefore, the brain, as an image, poses a dialectic between the material and the intangible. Drawing it means representing the machine of representation.

Laura Mesa has turned this image into the cornerstone of her exhibition: the works are different accumulations of serialized objects that have been made using processes of reproduction, registration, trace or tracing of that anatomical model. As they are artisanal

procedures, no two pieces are exactly alike, so a dialectic is established between the one and the multiple -the real as that which is equal to itself and different from its representations-. On the other hand, the artist deploys a sequence of successive codifications: if the image of the brain, as a codification of organic matter, functions culturally as a representation of thought itself and has been translated into a model for a specific use, what Laura Mesa does is to encrypt that image again, subjecting it to chained codification systems, some derived from the very registration procedures employed, and others from the critical revision of the technical and conceptual devices of drawing.

Let's take as an example his Chinese ink pieces. At first glance, they have the appearance of crumpled paper, which implies an inversion of the first characteristic of drawing: here it is the stain that registers the texture of the paper, and not the other way around. However, this obvious rhetorical game is not, in reality, but the visible trace of the measured and intricate technical process that allows the author to reproduce in India ink the shape of a tissue paper wrapping a fragment of the brain model. This produces a mechanism of multiple and sequential registration by which the original form ends up inscribed in a solid stain of ink, generating an image-vestige, a barely recognizable residue of what it was. This fragment of reality fossilized in ink is the final point of a reproduction process destined not to represent its object, but the impression that this object generates on paper, so this -the paper-, as an intermediary between the form of the brain -symbol of thought- and the final piece -the signifying matter of thought-, speaks poetically of drawing as a space of tension between idea and matter.

By working in this way with the fundamental materials in artistic drawing since modern times -graphite and India ink- Laura Mesa elevates these two techniques to the status of conceptual elements: they are so associated with the codification of drawing and its cultural legibility that they can already be considered, by themselves, rhetorical

mechanisms of representation. Therefore, what the artist does when she uses these materials to make her works is, literally, drawing, and not only because she works with the medium's own techniques, but, fundamentally, because she activates the conceptual machinery of drawing to create meaningful representations of a given reality. Reality that, as we have seen, in an eloquent circular movement, is a representation of the conceptual synthesis of a much more complex reality. Laura Mesa's works are, therefore, meta-representations to talk about the transits between reality and its image, between idea and matter. But above all, they are delicately introspective and silent pieces of art, whose interest unfolds when seen up close, when perceiving the reflections and the smell of the dry ink; when glimpsing the poetry of a contained, petrified drawing.

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