

Open-cut still life.

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One of the first things we can notice in Carola Redondo's art is the recurring montage of fragments that belong to the same scene. This scene is photographed several times from slightly different points of view. Later, these fragments or cutouts are re arranged into a digital collage. Broken and assembled, they inevitably remind us of Cubist experiments from Braque and Picasso or maybe to recent photographic collages from artists like David Hockney or Gordon Matta-Clark.

After this elemental but necessary introduction, I will try to write about two possible dimensions in the syntax of fragments. There's fragments, which are a result of an action, fragments that exist because of a subject that is constituted in the act of fragmentation. There are other subjects, which find fragments that come to them as they follow their way and not the other way around. They don't constitute themselves by a fragmentation act but by encountering a ready-made piece. We are dealing with two different types of fragments, the first one is produced and its origin supposes a subjective cause. The second one is found and its origin supposes an effective cause.

After doing this distinction, we notice why in both cases the relation between fragment and reality is different; the difference is based in the relation that the subject establishes with the total through the fragment. In the first one, the total is dealt with in present act, a whole that is graspable and reachable and from which the subject proceeds by extracting a portion. In the second case, the subject does not relate to the total and only has a fragment from which to infer or induce a missing total. Maybe the clearest example is when we look at History as a shapeless bundle of facts that are in permanent expansion and are difficult to hold, with whom it is only possible to connect through a faint glow from its incomplete remains). One same thing can correspond to both cases in different situations. In other words: both cases potentially hold each other but display themselves in different acts. Under this light, a cut out hand is not the same in a medicine school than the same hand at the feet of a detective. It is not equivalent to understand better, a known organism through the study of one of its organs, than trying to reconstruct as in the quoted example, not the mechanics of its muscles, but to answer the most basic question: under which circumstances a hand arrived to such a strange setting for a loose hand? Still, it doesn't seem completely impossible that the hand had fallen from the bag of a distracted medicine student.

As we will see further on, in the works of Redondo one thing transits through both states to end up refrigerated in a third one. First of all, what the artist has done is a violent gesture because of the action of cropping something out. The cropping act comes by the action of framing certain portions from reality, or for the sake of this text, from what happens to be the 'objective' of photography. The 'objective' of the images of Redondo is effectively something that comes across on her way (at least in all the images discussed in this text). The relation between what is found and what is cropped is the second aspect of our attention in which I will focus later. The third one, is constituted in the display of the cutout pieces into a second wholeness which can only be described by using another pair of opposites: paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures.

In simple words, a syntagmatic structure is one in which the relation between

a part and the total is organic: the part cannot be understood without the total and vice versa. The harmony between parts is consubstantial: both form a dialectic unit and both respond to the same law that is the one that decides the totality of its shape. A good example is the correct proportion between the size of the head and the body in a classical sculpture, or the sculptured hair of Daphne, which was Bernini's pride. Differently, the paradigmatic structure is the one in which the part integrates as a unit that is necessary but independent, that could be substituted by another part without affecting the total. As if we could just suddenly add a Pinocchio nose onto a Michelangelo's David. Collage and montage are its essence. Harmony or its mannerist infraction cannot be imagined under the same parameters in both situations. In a radical proposition as it was Parmigiano's maniera in his days, when the proportion between head and neck had to be of seven to one and not nine to one, a guitar player painted by Picasso, Don Quixote in Wall Street, or Christ burning in a Spanish fireplace of the sixteenth century, they all constitute something out of context. Dedalus was able to walk in the streets of Dublin, Mr. Bloom found gramophones over the tombs in a cemetery, and Breton could meet with Lautreamont. In most radical cases the parts integrate a total as dissonant units. We see this in photomontages from Kurt Schwitters or in the assemblages by Robert Rauschenberg. It has to do with a formal paradigm that originates in the rupture of the historical Avant Garde movements that today appear comprised and formalized as many others.

As we said before, these four categories do not apply to all things, except in very specific contexts. More frequent is that things escape from one category to the other, flowing without matching any limits imposed by linguistic denominations, moreover they co exist in a hybrid state of estrangement. The same applies to the next two notions that will be introduced briefly: Normality and exceptionality. AT this moment I think it is important to state that in these art works the various scenes are cropped and re arranged in the way of a collage, they are not related to a 'still life' where one scenario is artfificially set up to be photographed. It is a group of found fragments that are ensambled in a montage. That fact relates these art works with the New German Objectivity or Neue Sachlichkeit. Of course we can't apply this idea to all the images of the series because some have been deliberately framed by the photographer for the cut guillotine's cut and appear as the exact opposite of what I mention above.

I will refer, in relation to this, to the panoramic series. In those series these formal characteristics are manifest with a particular intensity. The specific work is called Potsdamer. What is being photographed is completely banal scene from the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. Pedestrians circulate through this non-place like the flow of water under a bridge; probably they don't know they are being photographed, just like in one of the works by Beat Streuli, for example. Here a typical phenomenon linked to the aesthetics of the cutting is produced. I introduced this non-original term before to refer to the fragments that are found (subjective cause) and the ones that are cutted-out (effective cause). In the first case the total is present and in the other it is absent. Both categories are relative and apply to the same thing in different contexts.

In some occasions the aesthetics of the cutting proceeds by extracting a portion from an undetermined flux of encountered happenings, like the transit of people through Potsdamer Platz. This is a very distinctive sign from the New Objectivity. We can see this in the photography of Andreas Gursky but also in the urban landscapes from the Ruhr zone by Albert Renger-Patzsch. They were made during the 1930's, same period when the term New Objectivity was introduced. This enables us to bring into consideration two new classifying concepts, namely, what is normal and what

is exceptional.

The types of fragment, both found and cropped, get visibility thanks to the fact that they have been separated from a shapeless total, where they can only be a particle in the middle of an ungraspable transit without a beginning or an end. Submerged in this flow, in permanent constitution and development, the link that will be separated from the whole chain is still something regular and normal, it remains invisible, or better said, not worthy of attention. No pedestrian considers other fellow pedestrians as particular beings unless a pedestrian manifests himself in a special way. The cropping act, the cutting-out is what separates the fragment from its context and makes it an exceptional piece. It gains a certain status; a new dimension to which it didn't belong before, and in this way is brought to our attention.

On the other side, the normal outcome in this sequence of facts is to pass unnoticed in this silent mass that flows through the world's metropolis. Maybe is this dialogue between the individual and the society of the masses one of the most distinctive features of the New Objectivity in photography. Nevertheless, we immediately notice similar features in works that are not photography. Doesn't something similar happen when Christo wraps up the Reichstag? Of course the Reichstag has no relation with the dialogue between the individual and the society of masses in the context of what is banal, but our point is that Christo puts his intervention before our eyes as a de contextualization, something in the state of being cutted out, in a state of exception. This poetics of de-contextualization is another precedent fact that roots in the rupture of the historical Avant Garde movements that now are presented to us already canonized. It is impossible not to mention the Ready- Made so frequently presented as the quintessence of any act of de contextualization.

Returning to our case, the anonymous pedestrian is exceptional when it becomes visible through the act of extraction, of being separated from a flow of trivial happenings in constant change. Even if this is not the only way of making it visible we cannot argue that a special status is by this extraction conferred to the fragment. It appears individualized, as a link to the missing container: the mass. It is only then when it starts operating as a piece in a state of exception, like that particular type of fragment that we called a cutout.

But how can this distinction between normal and exceptional set a dialogue with the first pair of differences we introduced, the one that separates what has been cropped from what has been found?

I also mentioned that the fragments that have been cropped belong to a subjective cause, which in this case is true because the pedestrians that we see crossing the Potsdamer Platz have been brought in front of our eyes thanks to the camera of Carola Redondo. We said that what was found supposed an effective cause while we can only infer or deduce the missing total. It is evident that the artist crops a recordable section of a total like Potsdamer Platz. Then she reticulated the fragments into a collage. According to the difference between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures, this operation that refers to Picasso, places the art work in an organic dimension because the fragment keeps some aspects of the dialectic relation, this simultaneous view that was also explored by Cubism. In this juncture between New Objectivity and simultaneous views we see a certain tone of realism. The ideological character of the New Objectivity is here exposed. In other words these huge masses that circulate all over the world form up a total that is only visible through the exhibition of a fragment found out and cropped apart. How could they become visible in other way? Moreover, they appear as images when, thanks to the cutting effect, they stop being normal and regular to become something else. In this manner, they become visible but also make their original container visible, which until then remained in

the shadows. Both become luminous exceptions or at least elements that require our attention and comprehension, even though both seen doomed to stay in a dark place similar to the one where Benjamin placed the Drama from the German Baroque. But after all, sometimes the darkest place is right under the light bulb. What flows through Potsdamer Platz is a link to something that can never be whole or present and that we recognize in other corners of the world: for example, in other panoramic pictures from Santiago de Chile taken by the artist where the city appears as a big open-air gas chamber, violent and splattered by several electric moon images. Let's agree that the mounting of this segments, cropped, found, and separated constitute three stages in relation to it's fragment nature, that belongs to a total. The term "second nature" is insufficient, "third nature" is false, "meta nature" somehow difficult to visualize. Amidst this doubt and mix of classifying terms, I propose for these works, the fictional term "Open-cut still life".