Cristina Iglesias: Daydreams and Spaces

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IN CRISTINA IGLESIAS’ recent show at the Marian Goodman Gallery different approaches to space were addressed. Some pieces attracted physical touch, another one was a site-specific installation, and other works included fourteen silk-screens, a mock up, and a video were images of large scale, public art. In these plural experiences of space, there were some recurrent themes: water, mirrors, labyrinths, lattices, geometric structures, and representations of artificial topographies. These features encouraged viewers to enter an enigmatic and intimate world, rooted in the unconscious and the oneiric.
Pozos I-V is a series of “wells” in the North Gallery. It consists of five large cubes of metal. Seen as a whole, the sculptures bring to mind Minimalism as they stand like ordered sentinels around the room. However, as the viewer comes closer and looks over the sides of the squares, an inner dimension is revealed. Deep cavities are lined with tangled roots and ropey vines. The effect is that of a dream. Iglesias did not try to render the effect of trompe l’oeil nor create convincing representations of natural elements. On the contrary she explores resins and other materials to create a cast bronze appearance. In places she adds simulacra of gold or silver patinas. The fictional topography exhibits a fictional character, which is closer to traditional bronze sculptures than the vegetal realm. Inside each structure, water swells and settles as if each cube was an actual well.

The sound of the water, or the silent manner in which the water fills and recedes, seems aimed at producing a sense of awareness of the present. Each instant seems to be part of bigger temporal units artificially suggested by the sculptures. In Pozos, time follows a circular movement, created by the repetitive cycle of flowing water.


Aljibes (wells) and fountains were important elements in traditional Spanish and Moorish architecture. They were usually located in outdoor courtyards, surrounded by the inner walls of the building, a practice also extensive in houses in Latin American and Caribbean colonies. With this reference in mind, Pozos blurs the margins between sculpture and architecture, as is often the case in many of Cristina Iglesias’ installations. Pozos I-V is contemplative artwork to be enjoyed in solitude and silence, or perhaps in momentary isolation from the rest of the show. “The well is an archetype, one of the gravest images of the human soul,” writes Gaston Bachelard in The Poetics of Reverie (104). Iglesias’ sculptures have to do with fairytales and memories of childhood.¹ The artificial topographies she represents could be compared to the ones found in nightmares, fantasy films, and stories.
of spells and enchantment. She expands these imaginative and intimate visions into the extensive space of the gallery.

Here there are three sets of oppositions. The first is geometric structures versus seemingly natural, organic elements. The second is the representational and artificial topographies versus the physical water. And the third is attentiveness to the present versus the oneric images and suggestive evocations of an intimate past. The sculptures oscillate between the experience of the actual object and the poetic daydream.

While commenting on some of her previous installations, the Spanish scholar Javier Maderuelo noticed that Iglesias’ works, like musical compositions, could be perceived as variations of the same theme (60-61). The same could be said of Pozos. They have similar structures and conceptions, however every sculpture is substantially different. Each one is aimed to inspire a particular set of emotions or associations. In a few of the pieces water spills simultaneously from several places in waterfall like effect; in two others water ascends from the depths, emerging from a dark hollow. In another it flows like a stream of spring water, reflected by inner, mirrored walls. In each pozo she plays with unique surfaces, patinas, and topographies. Iglesias offers images of calm waters, deep waters, mirroring waters.

The North Gallery Viewing Room was devoted to a number of Iglesias’ large-scale projects. Fourteen silk-screens are based on photographs of models of her underwater sculpture, Estancias Sumergidas (Submerged Rooms). She has worked on this piece for the last four years off the coast of Baja California. The black and white silkscreens of seemingly submerged panels of lattice evoke the splendor of a lost civilization: the fictional archeological ruins of Plato’s ancient utopia, Atlantis. Estancias Sumergidas is also a reminder that certain islands, like New Moore Island off the coast of India, have been dramatically submerged due to climate change.

At the center of the room is another large-scale project called Garden Piece. It is a variation on the cube concept with an interior comprised of simulated natural elements similar to those seen in the North Gallery. However there are significant differences. In this public art model the piece is located in a landscape and, as in many contemporary buildings covered in mirrorlike reflecting glass, the walls are actual mirrors. The cube is surrounded by a moat and there is a drawbridge similar to those of medieval fortresses and castles. There is also a gate, which leads to multiple corridors within the structure. This piece is an unusual environment for pedestrians to wander through: a labyrinth or a mirror house, with topographic representations, and views to the sky.

Finally, in the South Gallery, Bajo la superficie (Under the surface) is an interlude in the space of the gallery. The space was transformed by raising the floor in order to enclose Iglesias’ sculpture below it like a sunken garden or an artificial indoor piazza. The installation may help confirm the concept of tension between privacy and exposure that some scholars have noticed in Iglesias’ work. Bajo la superficie is a variation on her theme of the Pozos: a stream of water running over an artificial bed of roots and vines and surrounded by a geometric structure. In this regard the whole show could be compared to a polyphonic work, in which a phrase emerges and is relegated by another sequence of chords to another place but then comes back later with different melodic ornamentations. In Iglesias’ show at the
Marian Goodman Gallery, it was possible to trace this polyphonic structure in a continuous counterpoint between water, geometric forms, and depictions of natural, topographic elements.

Cristina Iglesias seeks to create spaces in which minimalism and post-minimalism converge in dreamlike images. She creates places that are simultaneously uncanny and familiar. Poetic uses of the space: dreamscapes.

NOTES
2 In many fairytales we find the trope of the well. See for instance Grimm’s The Wolf among Seven Little Kids, The Goose-Girl at the Well, Seven Ravens, The Frog Prince, Mother Holle, and others.
3 By March 2010 New Moore Island off the coast of India has had up to 18 inches submerge during the last two decades.

WORKS CITED