

There is no statue. Nothing is statue

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There are two forms of perception, tactile and visual, respectively related to things and space although it is common that touch provides a certain spatiality and that sight is aware of causality. This is how Russian philosopher Pavel Florenskij considered it, professor of the subject Theory of space in the art class he taught, during 1923 and 1924, at the Poligraphic Faculty of Vkhutemas, State School of Art and Technology in Moscow, since it was founded in 1920 until it was shut down in 1930, it was a centre of Russian avant garde. The concept of “thing” focused the Florenskij’s aesthetics, which he defined as a “fold” or “place of curvature” in space. In 1995 the publishers Adelphi from Milan published *Lo spazio e il tempo nell’arte* a compendium of his classes at Vkhutemas. “All that is done, remains” he wrote to his son before he was executed by a firing squad in 1937. Nearly sixty years after having been erased from the public sphere, his aesthetic thinking came to light, and conveyed the thoughts of Delfin Rodríguez on modern sculpture in his article “Nothing: contour metaphors. (Some ideas on sculpture and other contemporary objects)”.¹ From Florenskij’s view we derive that with sight we can perceive a work of art “when space prevails over things” whilst with touch we can perceive its character and condition of thing, of object, with the latter having priority over space. Florenskij exemplified his reflection with Greek sculpture, whose the images tended to come out of the themselves creating a sense of “a veil of fog with a subtle thickness” that can be seen by the fingers and touched with eyes, thus being awareness of the spatiality of things with sight. And if we agree with Victor I. Stoichita² in that images are differentiated from the rest of the world by something fundamental: that images do not exist, “touch the work” would then mean, notes the author, retracting it to the stage of object, infringing upon its essence, which belongs to the order of the imaginary. The Italian sculptor Medardo Rosso had no doubts on this, sculpture could only be perceived through a look. All his work is a claim of this demand whose reasons he did not doubt to argue: “Everybody’s look has always been according to touch. It has never respected light or colour, as if they made things for blind people. But do I touch or not touch? I have already said I do not touch. It is an infinity, an emotion, a colouring. I do not touch. People always believed that you saw by touching. I do not touch”.³

“We do not exist! We are only games of light in space”, Medardo Rosso used to insist. “Nothing is material in space, because everything is space and therefore everything is relative”. His words tried to explain the wish to forget the subject, and his works, sculptures and photographs, manifest his fondness for shadows,

1. RODRÍGUEZ, Delfin, “Nada: metáforas del contorno. (Algunas ideas sobre la escultura y otros objetos contemporáneos)”, in *¿Qué es la escultura moderna? Del objeto a la arquitectura*, Madrid, Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, 2003, pp. 17-31.

2. STOICHITA, Victor I., *Simulacros. El efecto Pigmalion: de Ovidio a Hitchcock*, Madrid, Siruela, 2006.

3. Statements from Medardo Rosso to Luigi Ambrosini, in the interview published by the newspaper *La Stampa* of Turin, on the 29th July 1923; reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition, *Medardo Rosso*, run by Gloria Moure and held at the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea of Santiago de Compostela, 1996.

for the infinity of a unit, custodian of an active moment of the process, and of thought, it is not in vain that art is “the true way of making you think”. If until then sculpture had been reduced to the tasks of taking away or adding from a nucleus, Rosso shows that “when a look passes over something, it takes away or adds matter, takes away and adds character”. This is one of the most outstanding contributions to sculpture, as Luciano Fabro was able to see.⁴ Medardo Rosso, creator and re-creator, found wax to be a material in which he could melt shapes and cause the impression of material dematerialising itself in those who look at them, “of a sculpture that is refused and is done away with”, “of going beyond sculpture” this how Giovanni Anselmo felt it.⁵ In the last fifteen years of his life, Rosso made no new sculptures, he devoted himself to recreating those he had made, and photographing them. Because photography allowed him to stop time in an active moment, the same as sculpture. The scholar of his work Luciano Caramel⁶ states that it is probable Medardo Rosso was not the author of the photographs, and that there taken by a cameraman following his precise and meticulous instructions on the frames, distance and lighting; Rosso would then meddle with the photographic films by scratching them, glazing them, disguising them or cutting them irregularly, with the intention, points out Caramel, to overcome the statue’s abstract objectivity, merging the figure and background, setting a particular visual perspective, and not only to suggest the key to the reading of his works or to facilitate the correct exposure. In short, photography as if it were research.

In the meantime, Rodin was dedicated to solving the crisis in sculpture, stressing the unity of the fragment or merging sculpture and pedestal in the same block. Rosso, installed in the crisis, showed his certainty that they were nothing but mere strategies to make believe that something new was being created.

The sculptures José Noguero models or carves are not touched with fingers but with eyes. The majority are also carried out to integrate themselves into the *image-act* of photography, which is also the custodian of his paintings and of the rumour of the imaginary. Just as Rosso, Noguero is fascinated by wax, an unstable material that is so suitable to express the expiry date of everything. There are no fragments in his works, or remains of the process or act of demolition, which he sometimes carries out. With regards to the pedestal, he resolves the problem by getting rid of it, reducing it to a minimal wooden support that is unable to hold the weight of the sculpture, or putting the image upside down; literally. And although now it is not a reason for discussion, Noguero perseveres in modelling sculpture, being the opposite of Michelangelo who considered sculpture that which was removed by force, because what was done by adding was more to do with painting; and it is not that Michelangelo looked down on the work of modelling, on the contrary, as it is known that his sculptural projects were preceded by many drawings and figures modelled in wax or clay, so useful

4. FABRO, Luciano, “Fotografía de Medardo Rosso. Entrevista con Jole de Sanna”, in *ibid.*, pp. 244-246.

5. ANSELMO, Giovanni, “Medardo Rosso”, in *ibid.*, p. 228.

6. CAMEL, Luciano, “Identidad y actualidad”, in *ibid.*, pp. 91-117.

for clarifying the idea, according to a working method which originates in the 15th century. Bernini manipulated clay and wax with extraordinary dexterity and speed, in the same way as stone; the specialists in his work point out that one of his greatest conquests was making marble as malleable as wax. With Rosso, as we have already said, material loses interest before the role of the look. But all the artists mentioned, including Noguero, agree that the “idea” is in the wax or clay model.

Before the works of José Noguero, sculptures, photographs, paintings, drawings, water colours, projections or videos, we are “actors” on a stage that leaves nothing to chance by activating optical and scenic devices whose main aims are not to let us leave. Deleuze and Guattari made this clear: “Of all art we would have to say: art is the presenter of effects, inventor of effects, creator of effects, relating to the precepts or views it gives us. Not only are they created in his work, he gives them to us and makes us guess with them, he takes us in the compound”.⁷ The spectator is in waiting, given that the act of looking does not extinguish itself in the moment. What is he waiting for, taking into account the artificial nature of the work of art, Luis Puelles in his work on the look resolves any queries: “the essential illusion of the fictional work is not that it looks real, or is simply realistic, but that it seems *to be real*”.⁸ And agreeing with Gadamer: attending is wanting to participate and looking is a way of participating, Noguero organises the stage for the meeting; an especially fruitful meeting set up as it is in a continuing luck open to multiple temporary links, as Benjamin would say, that refer to as Didi-Huberman has interpreted, a more fundamental temporality, which remains in mystery, susceptible to discovering or building. To that matching of times is José Noguero’s attachment to the imaginary, which Gilbert Durand⁹ has defined as a “completely other” logic, of a non located identity, an asymmetrical *tempo*. Attributes and adjectives occupy the place of the action’s subject in the imaginary story; it is like this that the features, characters and mythical conditions of the stories of Actaeon, Diana, Dionysos and Ariadne, and the symbolic reasons of the boat, mirror, tree or swing compose the visual grammar of the incomplete narrative structures that Noguero proposes in his works, and also in the displays of his exhibitions. Incomplete because everything is in suspense.

The stage designer Gastón Breyer¹⁰ noted that absence, invitation and demand of the stage are key points in the time of the staging. The actor first evokes the absence of the event and then invites you to become aware of the expectation, in a dual game of reflexive symmetry. An operation that, according to Breyer, is the existential need of being and exercising oneself, to be the Other to be He himself, of calling the meeting and being at the same time called, of saying and being said, of being explicitly named. The stage is therefore a place for looks and

7. Reflection from PUELLES ROMERO, Luis, *Mirar al que mira. Teoría estética y sujeto espectador*, Madrid, Abada, 2011.

8. PUELLES ROMERO, Luis, *ibid.*

9. DURAND, Gilbert, *Lo imaginario*, Barcelona, Ediciones del Bronce, 2000.

10. BREYER, Gastón, *La escena presente*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Infinito, 2005.



Tozán, 2002

therefore the stage designer is the master that shows you how to look. Noguero builds stages that he later photographs; the movements of the stage curtain hide and show a stage empty geographically, physically and emotionally which in its instability look after that silence which mutes any possibility of an action that goes too far. All is kept waiting in these empty rooms, in the stages and setting up of stages that he organises in his workshop, and also in the display stages which will make the spectator a powerful actor.

In the fertile exercise of looking *backwards*, we find the ability of Caravaggio to compose scenes as if they were confined to theatrical spaces. The enormity of the world was reduced in his paintings to the confines of a closed room, sometimes his own studio, where the painter could control the action of the characters, points out his biographer Andrew Graham-Dixon¹¹ who, given the interest of his *mise-en-scène*, places the background in the art of *sacro monte*, whose origin goes back to the 15th century, rooted at the same time in traditions from the start of the Renaissance, like the paintings of Giotto, closely linked to the sacramental plays or the sculptures of Donatello, which displaced in the late Renaissance from the art centres of Rome and Florence resurfaced in Modena in the works of Guido Mazzoni, among other sculptors. All these sculptural experiences

11. GRAHAM-DIXON, Andrew, *Caravaggio. Una vida sagrada y profana*, Madrid, Taurus, 2011.

are rooted in the paintings of Caravaggio. What can the pictures of Noguero share with those of Caravaggio, beside the “idea of looking *back*”, or their shared fondness of representing feet?, that both stop time in a theatrical space, and both seem to be suspended on the edge of their disappearance.

Jean-Claude Lemagny¹² maintains that in a photograph nothing happens, except metaphorically, when you want to say there are many things to see. He is also of the opinion that in a photograph you have to learn not to impose meanings, because there are none, and insists on Bachelard’s theory that art like science in reality does not reveal itself, but manifests itself; from which he concludes that the essential reality of a photograph lies in the subject whose essential quality is touch, even if you cannot touch it like a sculpture, because sight is a variation of the sense of touch, as physiologists argue on pointing out that the retina is a piece of skin with the ability to touch light. In short, through photography what is visual and tactile are parts of the same entirety. In the activity of seeing we find José Noguero’s search for the poetic of an illuminated space for contemplation, where the light *reveals*, time has been interrupted and as Susan Sontag noted, the silence produces the need to fix the sight.

An artist does not have a branch He has to be on a good path. Rodin is still on the trade path. He (still) makes statues. A statue does not exist Nothing is statue.

We are cases of light. Everything has a single light and can only be seen under one light. We can not turn around it.

I do not know if Rodin admires me. But he does not look done on me.

And the Greeks, those paperweights of the second Greece, have they not positioned us enough? Matter does not exist. To do something means having forgotten matter.

Nothing is matter in space. What is behind is in front in emotion. There is no second or third place. There is one dominant one. Therefore, you cannot make the thing to go round it.

If light were four times stronger, it would eat everything up, except for one or two variants. This dominant, this thought, what survives, is has to be sculpted.¹³

I. The body of the image

“There was nobody in him; behind his face (that even behind the poor paintings of the period he does not look like anybody else) and his words, which were many, fantastic and agitated, there was only a little cold, a dream not dreamt by somebody. At first he thought everybody was like him but the strangeness of a colleague he had started to comment this vacuity, revealed his error and he stopped feeling, forever, that an individual must not differ from the species. Sometimes he thought that he would find a remedy for his ailment in books and so he learnt a little Latin and a little less Greek than a contemporary would speak; then he thought that in exercising an elemental rite of humanity, could be what he was looking for and”. José

12. LEMAGNY, Jean-Claude, “¿Es la fotografía un arte plástico?”, in YATES, Steve [ed.], *Poéticas del espacio. Antología crítica sobre la fotografía*, Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 2002, pp. 189-203.

13. ROSSO, Medardo, “No se puede girar alrededor”, in *Medardo Rosso, op. cit.*, p. 171.

Noguero chose the start of the story “Everything and Nothing” included in *The Maker* by Borges to organise a collage of loose sheets with texts by the writer which he nailed on the wall using a simple piece of wood whose shape could be that of a pedestal, minimal but enough. The title of the work: *Borges*. It was carried out in 1990, just after the first public presentation in a group exhibition held at the Jaume Busquets hall in Barcelona, in 1989, and the same year that he took part in the Young Aragonese Competition for Plastic Arts organised by the Government of Aragón, where he presented the photographic triptych *Pie espejo*. A horizontal mirror framed in wood takes in the image of the feet of a chair, of what could be a table, and the feet of the artist; in the first photograph the two feet, in the following two only one. All a horizon of events, which take place in Noguero’s workshop. The body of the image. Many and none. “The story adds that, before or after dying, he found himself before God and said to him: I, who have been in vain of so many man, want to be one and I. God’s voices replied from a whirlwind: I am also not one; I dreamt the world like you dreamt up your work, my Shakespeare, and amongst the shapes of my dream are you, who like me are many and nobody”, finished Borges’ story.

In his *Brief story of the image*, Michel Melot¹⁴ deals with the origins of the word *image*, and even when we should make a clear distinction between the different ways we choose, this time, the line derived from the Latin *imago* which expresses the funeral statue, the appearance and the dream, and shares its roots *im* with *imitatio*, linked to the Greek term *mimesis*, to signify the actor’s art with a dual meaning: to *express* a deep and indescribable emotion through language and mechanically *reproduce* a model like the *imitators do*. Express or reproduce? that is the question, concludes Melot, who weaves the story of the image; not without first thinking about whether it is possible to express oneself without learning how to do so, that is, without imitating. In a passage from *Sofist* by Plato two ways of making images were differentiated: the art of copying and that of simulating; the first has triumphed in history of western art whilst the second remained “loaded with dark powers”, as Victor I. Stoichita¹⁵ states, in his essay *Simulacros. El efecto Pigmalión: de Ovidio a Hitchcock*, defends the persistence of simulation in time and in the very heart of history of mimesis against those who believe that it was Modernity who rediscovered it after having remained hidden since Platonism. In the story of Pygmalion, the legendary king of Cyprus is in love with the marble sculpture that Venus gave life to, Stoichita finds the myth of the image-work, or of the body of the image -which we have given as a heading of this chapter-, so as to point out the origin of the human impulse of creating bodies that are full of life, and establishing the differences between the notions of “similarities” and “existence”; the latter the condition of the simulation that Stoichita defines as a device or artificial construction that does not copy an object of the world but that projects itself in the world.

14. MELOT, Michel, *Breve historia de la imagen*, Madrid, Siruela, 2010.

15. STOICHITA, Victor I., *Simulacros. El efecto Pigmalión: de Ovidio a Hitchcock, op. cit.*, 2006.

Even being the most carefree of men, the most unfortunate, the most unfortunate or the vilest, beggar or banker, the ghost of stone takes you over for a few minutes, and orders on behalf of the past, to think about the things that are not from the earth.

This is the divine role of sculpture.

Who can doubt that you need a powerful imagination to fulfil such a magnificent programme? A unique art that penetrates the fogs of time, and that, in primitive times, produced works that amazed the civilised spirit! Art, in what should be considered as a quality in painting can become a vice or fault, in which perfection is all the more necessary than the medium, fuller in appearance, but more barbaric and childish, always giving, even to most mediocre works, a look that it is finished and perfect. Before an object extracted from nature and represented using sculpture, ie round, elusive, around which you can turn freely, and as the natural object itself, surrounded by air, the peasant, the primitive man, the savage, feels no indecision; whilst a painting, for its immense claims due to its paradoxical and abstract nature, makes them restless and disturbed.¹⁶

Baudelaire missed in the sculptures of the Salón of 1859 the prodigious strength that Egypt, Greece or Michelangelo gave to their “immobile ghosts”. “What a look in those eyes that have no pupils!”. Only real sculpture “provides everything that is human something that is eternal, which comes from the hardness of the material used. Anger becomes calm, tenderness severe, sleep fickle and polished from the painting it becomes strong and stubborn meditation”. The traveller without a destination in whom Baudelaire confided the task of looking for *modernity* should “extract the eternal from the transitory” into a world in ruins. The *flâneur* could only think of these things which are not of the land for a few minutes when he came up against the immobile ghosts of stone on his journey; and only in the name of the past, as everything had been consumed. Imprisoned in the large stores, once the urban walk became impossible, the *flâneur* put his perception at the service of the unstoppable and contagious process of commercialisation of the emerging society of the masses; this is the role that Walter Benjamin gave to the passer-by, a figure from the past that had to share the stage with the new, that of a historian as a rag and bone man, busy collecting waste to convert it into new objects, clarifies Reyes Mate¹⁷ “not to recycle them and return to the fate of consumption, but to wake them up to a new life”. A collector of rags and waste of the world, his *Book of Passages* is not but the end of an era of urban worlds of dreams.¹⁸

In September 1940, the police of Franco intercepted Walter Benjamin whilst fleeing from Paris taken by the Nazis. Fearing he would be handed over to the Gestapo he decided to commit suicide. That year Hitler was walking around Paris accompanied by the architect Albert Speer, who had to reconstruct Berlin as an image of the French capital. Berlin had to be more beautiful, and Paris would only be its shadow, why destroy it? Hitler asked himself. It is known

16. BAUDELAIRE, Charles, “Salón de 1859. Letters to the Editor of *Revue Française*. Escultura”, in *Salones y otros escritos sobre arte*, Madrid, La Balsa de la Medusa, 1996, pp. 281-291.

17. REYES MATE, Manuel, *Medianoche en la historia. Comentarios a la tesis de Walter Benjamin “Sobre el concepto de historia”*, Madrid, Trotta, 2009, p. 33.

18. BUCK-MORSS, Susan, *Dialéctica de la mirada. Walter Benjamin y el proyecto de los Pasajes*, Madrid, La Balsa de la Medusa, 1995, p. 359.

that Speer used to draw the future ruins of the buildings he designed as he considered that the true value of architecture was in the strength of its ruin. The remains of Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilisations remained intact in his memory. It was not the first time that a ruin was presented as part of the project as Rafael Argullol¹⁹ remembered, it had been treated like this in the past by the Bibiena, architects from Bologna from the first half of the 18th century and also by Piranesi. Although, and as Antoni Marí indicates, “the spectacle of the ruin, from the First World War, does not show any memory from the past, nor does it express history, nor any thoughts on what has been lost”,²⁰ it only refers to it, a ruin produced by the constant destruction of man, “it is the tragic or grotesque presence of a lost splendour, which remains unchangeable in a new order where now nothing is recognisable”.²¹ Marc Augé maintains that “looking at ruins allows us to fleetingly see the existence of a time that is not the time that history manuals speak about or that the restorations try to bring back to life. It is a *pure* time, far away from our world of simulations, of our violent world whose remains are not able to become ruins. “It is a lost time whose recovery competes with art”.²² To what art, that of copying or that of simulating. And why should we choose if we find the persistence of the simulation in time and in the very heart of the history of mimesis, as Stoichita states. Anyhow everything is fiction. And simulation, then. And what *pure* time does Augé refer to, to the paradigm of intemporality itself, that is, the time of classical sculpture, as Baudelaire understood.

However what happened is that everything broke up after the First World War and that generation that had gone to school in a horse-drawn carriage found “under an open sky in a field where nothing, except the clouds, remained alien to change; and under these clouds, in a field with the strength of explosions and destructive torrents, was the fragile small body of man”, wrote Benjamin, also convinced of the existence of a “secret agreement between past generations and this one”. Time perseveres. Cioran had already written this: “Nobody has ever been able to free themselves of Time”. And tied to time, images become revealing temporary links that derive in the unexpected transformation of the original that they take as a model. From the beginning José Noguero wanted to be a participant of this common project with a passage that has in the body of the image its theoretical base and plastic valuation. And this decision explains his interest for the study of myths and legends of the sculptured body, his fondness for simplicity and spiritual silence of the Greek and Medieval archaic statues, and also for Indian sculpture, and his fascination for works of creators along history who have returned to the origins, moved by the greatness of the beginning. And however, it is not the sculptured, painted, reflected and photographed bodies by Noguero that are the pure and timeless bodies of the old world. They could not be. Among other reasons for the definitive loss of the memory of what is

19. ARGULLOL, Rafael, “El poder de la ruina”, *El País*, Madrid, 1 de febrero de 2010, pp. 25-26.

20. MARÍ, Antoni [curator], *El esplendor de la ruina*, Barcelona, Fundació Caixa Catalunya, 2005, p. 20.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

22. AUGÉ, Marc, *El tiempo en ruinas*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 2003, s/p.

Sacred, which it is not forgetting the Sacred, but forgetting the memory of what is Sacred. This is how Vincenzo Vitiello considers it and José Noguero agrees with him, despite everything, he insists on thinking on the matter to light up everything that survives among what is seen and what is hidden. That which survives. That which has to be sculpted.

II. Interval of times

Pie espejo is the title of a photographic triptych made by José Noguero in 1990. It is one of the first photographs where he introduces a mirror in order to capture the instant in which the image receives the reflection of something that is happening on the other side, outside the frame, even though we know the frame does not exist. The mirror functions as a method of doubling which confirms the time of the image reflected within the photographic image, whose aim is not intended in any way to reproduce mimetic reality but return to the referent, which is but the imprint of the real, made up from temporary and spatial cuts which belong to the act of photographing, as proposed by Philippe Dubois.²³ The image-act temporarily interrupts, detains, immobilises, separates the duration capturing only an instant; and spatially it divides, chooses, isolates, captures, cuts a portion of the extension. Where the photographer cuts, the painter adds, and whilst the pictorial space is a space given beforehand whose frame, as Bazin says, polarises the space towards the inside, the photographic space, points out Dubois, is not given and is also not built, as it is a *subtraction* that is operated on *in block*. This is what a photograph shows which is as important as what it does not show: there is an unavoidable *relationship* of the outside with the inside which makes all photography to be read as a carrier of a “virtual presence”.

Upon insertion in the inside of the “real” space of the photographic image of one or more mirrors, bits of virtual spaces, outside the first frame but contiguous and contemporary to it, Dubois discusses a number of effects: the out-of-field fragment is the reflection that occupies a space in the field, taking over a portion of this; in addition to hiding a part of the field space to function as registration of a figurative space in another, an operation that will be important to address in the cut of the mirror and the photography, as well as the relationships established between the two spaces, distinguishing when the mirror reflects a piece of space outside the field, and when the mirror refers to a region of space *already* situated in the field but perceived from another angle. In the first case, Dubois continues his analysis, the space reflected in the mirror can be found on the sides of the image, in the extended universe of fiction; and in the second, it seeks to reveal the elements that could not be seen or were not visible from the angle that the mirror allows. In both cases, the aim is to *multiply the looks* on the inside of the field, marking in all its heterogeneity an exploded and polymorphous vision of photographic space. Finally, the multiplication of mirrors would make it difficult to distinguish

23. DUBOIS, Philippe, *El acto fotográfico. De la representación a la recepción*, Barcelona, Paidós Ibérica, 1994.

what is reflection, or reflection of the reflection, of that which it is not, making the different levels of representation impossible to differentiate.

In José Noguero's triptych, the framed mirrors leaning on the floor of the room occupy a photographic field space without hiding anything that may interest the viewer; they are inserted naturally attracting the looks from the inside, as if it were a painting. The same happens in another series of photographs with the exception that the transparent surface of the mirror passes through the photographic field, to frame the composition, which is outside the frame, with care not to fracture the fictional spatial continuity; sometimes it is impossible to know the territory of fiction that takes place in a stage area where the window and light play a key role in the compositions. The places where the photographic event occurs are the artist's workshops, whose organisation and tools, sometimes, are reflected, or bare rooms of his studio where he carefully sets the scene for the sculptures and paintings, and the artist's own image, whose ultimate meaning escapes furtively between the grooves of fiction that the reflected and photographed images ensure. The myth of Narcissus, so linked to the theme of the mirror, tells us of the dangers lurking for those who try to embrace and own their own image, in his essay on the myth of Pygmalion, Stoichita made clear that for the simulation to succeed then the model must die.

Noguero painted *Charca con peces* in 1999, whose water is full of shadows, like silhouettes, tangled in abysmal colours changing reflections, dramatise the other myth linked to mirror, that of Actaeon, to whom he devoted a series of paintings and several sculptures, between 1997 and 2000. Much has been written about the myth of Actaeon and some interpretations may well explain the Noguero's interest for the figure of the famous hunter of Greek mythology who surprised the goddess Diana naked while bathing. Seeing that she was being watched, Diana metamorphosed Actaeon into a stag, and as owner of the dogs, launched the pack to hunt. Actaeon was torn apart and his remains scattered and unburied spawning shadows that haunt the bushes. And the centaur Chiron, Actaeon's master in the art of hunting, modelled his statue to comfort the dogs, desperate because they had devoured their master. As Gilbert Durand²⁴ has written, there is no lack of detail in this myth: fleeting transformation under a devouring aspect, deep water, female bathing, hair, screaming, and all wrapped up in an atmosphere of catastrophe. For Angel Gabilondo²⁵ Diana's bathing and Actaeon's downfall evokes the dialectic between the look that looks at nudity and nudity that you look at with that look; a dialectic that in that moment is longer so. In the look, he concludes, it is he who is looked who is divided (and until death) on the false theater scene. Luis Puelles Romero²⁶ argues that a work of art cannot forget about the tension that keeps it alive: must not lose sight of the viewer and therefore does not allow the viewer to lose sight of it. As the goddess Diana because, as interpreted by Pierre Klossowski,

24. DURAND, Gilbert, *Las estructuras antropológicas del imaginario. Introducción a la arquetipología general*, Madrid, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005.

25. GABILONDO, Ángel, “De repente. La irrupción de otro ver”, en *La distancia y la huella. Para una antropología de la mirada*, Cuenca, Diputación Provincial de Cuenca, 2008.

26. PUELLES ROMERO, Luis, *Mirar al que mira...*, op. cit., 2011.

it is her desire to see herself what it takes her to see herself in Actaeon's look. All indications are that, as announced by Puellas, the viewer is under the supervision of the work that he looks at wanting to fascinate him, paralyzing his body, not letting him go. And Didi-Huberman concludes:²⁷ "What we see is not worth - not living-to our eyes rather than by what we see."

The figures that Noguero paints, sculpts or photographs make us become used to looking at the viewer, I would say that they even ignore him, therefore they are not seen in our look, and however we feel vulnerable before its presence or reflection. His aim is nothing else: give to see to make think.

III. The artist's workshop

... But, what an impression of grandeur and strangeness this wide clear hall leaves, with all those white shapes, glowing, which, due to the high and numerous windows, looking out, like the fauna of an aquarium!... Over several square metres, only fragments touching each other, bare, like hands or even bigger... But nothing more than pieces, hardly any whole: here a simple piece of an arm; there another of a leg; and on the side the torso. The torso of a statue with the animated head of another below, and the arm of a third... Like in an unspeakable storm, an unprecedented cataclysm, had fallen upon this work. And consequently, the more you look, the deeper the impression that everything would be less complete, if any of those bodies would have been whole. Each of the fragments is such an eminent unit, so awesome, it exhausts every possibility, in itself it has little to have an accessory, that you forget that it deals with parts and often parts from different sets although passionately interrelated amongst each other. Rodin, born of an obscure poverty, understood, better than anyone that all beauty, that of a being or a thing, is constantly threatened by circumstances and time, and it is a spark, a kind of youth of all ages, which blooms, passes and never lasts. Once he learned this concept was when he could not no longer bear that beauty, the essential beauty, continued like that, having a simple appearance. He wanted it to go. And things subjected to time he took them and tried to adapt them to a less threatened world, more peaceful, more eternal, of pure space. His work has protected him, he has lived in it as in a forest, and must have lived there for a long time, as the forest planted with his hands has become a vast jungle...

So enthusiastic is the description of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, Rodin's secretary for a short time, he made the sculptor's workshop in Meudon his wife Clara. Meudon's workshop, reconstruction of an assembly of sculptures, mostly plaster fragments or sketches, photographs and drawings that Rodin presented in the Alma Hall at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900, the photograph bears witness of what Jacques-Ernest Bulloz made around 1904-1905. In another letter, Rilke shared with his friend Lou Andrea Salomé the deep impression of being witness to Rodin's creative act:

A fugitive emotion, the remnants of a dream, the birth of an intuition, no matter what, it has served to form those things; and those things, one after another, aligned on their sides, have raised around a solid circle, a large quiet family, to which has been looked a past so distant that he himself seems to be born from this ancient dynasty.

27. DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges, *Lo que vemos, lo que nos mira*, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 2010.

The time turned the pure space of the sculpture in an upheaval and interrupted the classic imperturbability "The time has come to make the statue. Can the sculptor carry it out?" asked the French philosopher, historian and critic Hippolyte Taine. He answered by a passionate connoisseur and collector of ancient art, Rodin, the great destroyer Rilke called him, with a renewed conception of the sculptured body which demanded its deconstruction to be able to represent unity in each of its fragments. Given the disagreement of Medardo Rosso, defender of material unity of sculpture. Rosso's workshop is also worthy of note: everything in it was perfectly organised, including the route that would make its visitors view the works from the right point of view, the only possible way, and always with look never touch. Luciano Caramel²⁸ says that Medardo Rosso used to include in his displays and visits to the workshop what he called "comparison parts" "real or reduced size copies of old sculptures or reduced or the complete Renaissance beyond their poetics, so that viewers could understand the true value of his original works. In 1933 the magazine *Cahiers d'Art* devoted a special issue, 7-10, Greek art, which so influenced Rodin. It happens that the photographs that illustrate it, as Calvo Serraller²⁹ sees, distort the values of classical purity by having been taken from unusual angles and perspectives spatial and temporal, very consistent with the sculptures that Picasso created between 1931 and 1932 in his workshop of Boisgeloup Castle, modern at the time in the graphic *Suite Vollard* (1930-1937). The first issue of the *Minotaur* magazine, published in June 1933, included Breton's article "Picasso dans son élément", accompanied by reproductions of the print series "The Sculptor's Studio" from the *Suite Vollard* and signed photographs by Brassai of rounded and brutal classical sculptures of Picasso. Brassai left a written testimony of his arrival to the workshop:

He opened the door of one of those huge warehouses and could see, radiant with whiteness, a town of sculptures... He was surprised by the roundness of all those shapes. A new woman had entered Picasso's life: Marie Thérèse Walter. He had found her by chance in the rue La Boétie and painted her for the first time just a year before on the 16th December 1931, in the *Red Armchair*. [...] From that day all his painting started to become uneven. Like the flat with three-dimensional, straight lines, angular, often interfere with the curved lines in his work, followed by sweetness of hardness, tenderness of violence. At no time in his life was his painting so billowy, so full of sinuous curves, twisted arms, hair in wisps... Most statues in front of me denounced the imprint of that *new look*, starting with the bust of Marie-Thérèse leaning forwards, her head almost classical, the straight line of her forehead continuously united with that of the nose, a line that pervaded all his work. Inside the *Sculptor's studio* series, which Picasso had recorded for Vollard (he had let me see some evidence on the rue La Boétie: silent tête-à-tête between the artist and his model, full of sensuality and carnal pleasure), also included in the future plans, monumental, almost spherical heads. There were not but imaginary! My surprise was great on finding here in the flesh, I mean, in all of its depth, all curved, the increasingly prominent nose, eyes shaped like a ball, like a barbarian goddess.³⁰

28. CAMEL, Luciano, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-117.

29. CALVO SERRALLER, Francisco, "La parábola del escultor", en *Picasso. Suite Vollard*, Madrid, Instituto de Crédito Oficial, 1991, pp. 25-49.

30. Citado en *ibid.*, pp. 26 y 28.

Brassaï also witnessed the assembly process that Picasso carried out for the cover of the first issue of *Minotaure*: “Pinning a piece of corrugated cardboard with pins on a table similar to that used for his sculptures”. The artists’ workshops interested the magazine, which devoted attention to them in No. 3-4 (1933) with Maurice Raynal’s text “God-Table -Bucket” and photographs of the workshops of Brancusi, Despiau, Giacometti, Laurens, Lipchitz and Maillol. Ángel González García³¹ has written on the subject; through him we sense the noise of Giacometti’s workshop on rue Hippolyte Maindron which Scheidegger’s photographs show as dirty, messy and full of debris. Everything is in order in Brancusi’s studio, the only one in charge of organising his works according to different combinations, “mobile groups” he called them, with the clear intention of offering them as small workshops to a possible collector. Man Ray said he was “struck by the whiteness and brightness of the room” the first time he entered Brancusi’s studio, although Ángel González supposes he exaggerated on seeing the photographs, the light is concentrated on the works and the rest is in shadows: this is what the plaster wanted, a material without light that absorbs all it finds. To photograph his metal works Brancusi chose the moment when the light reflected off the polished surfaces; the description of the work *Leda* that Roché does this and Gonzalez states: “Incessantly and slowly spinning on its pedestal, like a gold mirror reflecting the rolling and shifting content of the workshop, dizzily mixing mythical forms with statues and bystanders, causing an amazement that still remains in me after fifty visits...”.

Ugo Mulas photographed David Smith’s workshop in Voltri in 1962. Mulas’ decision does not convince González to photograph Smith’s works on a dark background; he thinks that clarity would have a lot better: in the snow or covered with snow, as if they emerged from their extreme clarity I sense that Smith was no stranger to the Mulas’ decision. In the images inside the workshop, which was once a factory, sculptures merge with tools, and parts to build future sculptures are organised according to a strict order on the work desk, bathed in light, waiting for creative revelation announcing the action of the artist’s hands towards which he directs his attention, indicated by the white shirt cuffs that emerge from the dark jacket worn by the artist. The same strategy when choosing the parts to be welded, or when he draws with white chalk on the ground the outline of a future work. When the sculptures are finished, David Smith takes them out to the landscape, sometimes snowy. In his *Report on Voltri*,³² David Smith writes on the plotting table: “thick steel was never white. I made it be painted with lime and water. Ancient use, practical for being there, it gave me a contact of order thereafter allowing me to work freely without order. The gauges and compasses belonged to a blacksmith, crude and inaccurate After *Voltri XXII*, from the plotting table came five

31. GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, Ángel, “La zanja luminosa”, en *¿Qué es la escultura moderna? Del objeto a la arquitectura*, op. cit. pp. 71-112.

32. SMITH, David, “Informe sobre Voltri”, in GIMÉNEZ, Carmen [curator y editor], *David Smith 1906-1965*, Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía e IVAM, Centre Julio González, 1996, pp. 117-130.



Sin título, 1996

pieces of different scale”; the courtyard where there were “flowers and fig trees planted by the workers. These factories, now abandoned due to automation, were from the manual era, when the day was ten, eleven or twelve hours and work was to live [...]. This courtyard had the flavour and nostalgia of my first blacksmith’s shop in Brooklyn in 1934, but bigger, and here what I would have hung or could find was mine. In the courtyard there where sheets of different thicknesses, rusting. I used them, but I had to hurry”; on workbenches “the atmosphere was awesome and the air from the shock: the sole survivor who returned after the Holocaust, and how he had felt when very young, in Decatur, the first time I snuck out the window in an abandoned factory. After the first impression of that vastness and privilege, I felt at home and went to work”; he refers to the problem: “First day, being presented in a white collar to my workers, who could not speak to: embarrassing for everybody [...] After welding, transferring, wiping, my neck was perfect. From then on we worked together marvellously”; and a dream: “So many dreams have been lost due to lack of equipment, work space, storage place etc, so that another one passes to be another desire”. All this is in Ugo Mulas’ photographs.

“I have a preference for abandoned factories and rural landscapes. I appreciate the emptiness that belongs to old experiences, facts or forgotten events”, wrote José Noguero in the booklet of his exhibition at Joan Prats in Barcelona in 1993. And as David Smith confessed, many of Noguero’s dreams have been lost due to lack of equipment, work space and storage location. In order to overcome these limitations Noguero explores in his works different perception mechanisms next to other theoretical, plastic and visual solutions, allowing him to expand the scene of action; the same objective guides the order governing his exhibition displays. Stage designs that give continuity to the wishes and dreams lost due to the lack of space. Noguero does not neglect the photographic portrait of his workshops, for him places to work and live, and therefore authentic self portraits although he never appears working. Sometimes huge and ramshackled, others empty and more or less organised in an order that allows you to see the different stages of work are deliberately overlapping in a kind of layers or levels of representation that would have continuity in the *mise-en-scène* of his photographs, the majority organised in the workshop, and in their final layout in the exhibition space where they will share the stage with sculptures, paintings, drawings and watercolours. The noise and chaos of their workshops is cushioned in visual narratives always interrupted by his photographs and frozen in the space of the exhibition halls, crouched in a vacuum.

IV. The limit of seeing everything

In the origin of the film *Ulysses’ Gaze* (1995) is in the letter that Theo Angelopoulos received from the daughter of the Italian sculptor Giacomo Manzù in which she said that her father, before dying, had had a fixed idea: sculpting the look Ulysses, because he thought that this look contained the whole human adventure. It was then that Angelopoulos decided to film the odyssey of a modern Ulysses, “A”,

a film director who after 35 years in exile returned to Greece under the guise of attending a screening of one of his films in the city of Florina, although his real purpose was to seek the three indeveloped reels, that might contain the first images of the Balkan Peninsula made by the brothers Milto and Yannakis Manakis in the early twentieth century. The search for that original look, which had not yet seen the light, was the reason for the trip. In one of the sequences, “A” crosses the Danube upstream on a barge carrying a gigantic and broken statue of Lenin, reminiscent of the verses of the Greek poet Giorgos Seferis: “I woke up with this heavy marble head in my hands, and do not know where to leave it.” The film ends in the stalls of the Sarajevo film library in ruins, envisioning the brief and fragile images retrieved. The odyssey continues. “I dreamt that this would be the end of my journey... but in short it is the start”.³³

The outbreak in 1876 of the Serbian-Turkish War, the start the year after of the most serious Russian-Turkish conflict, roughly coincides in time with the crisis of the sculpture, with not knowing what to do and where to leave it, especially commemorative ones, in a secularised private society and thus from all divine assistance that ultimately led to the neglect of the Sacred memory. Whilst all this was happening Alexander Bogdánov wrote about the *Venus de Milo*: “the Gods are dead. The Goddess no longer meets her former group; and yet, the people felt the great organising force of this statue, looked at its beauty. And since the moment they looked at it, they feel united by something in common”. Also André Malraux in *The Imaginary Museum* announced that the new era was accompanied by the beginning “of an unprecedented art past [...] That representing the gods has for millennia been the reason for art is something known. Superficially. Moreover, the first agnostic civilisation, resurrecting all others, resurrected sacred works. And with the unlimited domain in which Roman art mixes with the ancient East, the empires of Asia and America installed in an eternal Middle Ages, contingents without eras, appears the enigma of power which for us joins in a common presence the statues of the most ancient Pharaohs and Sumerian princes, those who Michelangelo and teachers of Chartres carved, the frescoes in Assisi and Nara, the paintings of Rembrandt, and Piero della Francesca and Van Gogh, those of Cézanne and the bisons of Lascaux”.

Sculpture then, as confirmed and outlined by Calvo Serraller,³⁴ could only survive as old due to its inability to adapt to modernity; artists had to review anti-modern traditional values in order to address new objectives, among which the principal position was occupied by the break with monumental conception, and the vindication of piecemeal in an attempt to temporise an art hitherto presented as an ideal. In this first destructive phase in which the classical statue becomes temporary until it becomes a set of ruins, as Calvo Serraller says, Rodin, the great destroyer as Rilke named him, stands as one of the protagonists of this process of renewal to which he contributed to with radical decisions such as the assessment of the unity of a fragment and that of merging in the *Monument to*

33. Notes taken from Santiago Fillol’s text to present the DVD of the film *Ulysses’ Gaze*.

34. CALVO SERRALLER, Francisco, *La senda extraviada del arte*, Madrid, Mondadori, 1992, pp. 35-48.

Balzac the sculpture and pedestal in a single block. It did not seem to Medardo Rosso to be a drastic option and he announced this in a letter to the editor of the newspaper *La Vie de Paris*, published on 1st June 1906, in response to the “Open Letter to Mr. Rodin, statue maker” by André Ibels: “No, no, I have not put my hands on the work called: *Balzac*, all I did was show Mr Rodin -making him note *de visu*- that *even in the traditional way of understanding statuary material*, it could only come out favoured before the principle of ‘unity’ avoiding the ‘digging of holes for eyes in order to point out the look’ and removing ‘the platform’ on which the sculptor has placed his work. By doing so, he pointed out the placement and purpose of the statue. Repainting an old house does nothing to make people believe that it is a new house”.³⁵

In the debate on sculpture’s present and future Émile Zola took part, and with whom Medardo Rosso shared so much, in a magnificent and revealing chapter of his novel *L’Oeuvre* (1886):

Amid the workshop, on a workbench made from a consolidated crate, stood a statue squeezed in by old clothes; they were so cold, that the crushing hardness of the folds would sketch it, like under the softness of a shroud . He had finally achieved his long held dream, not done until then, due to a lack of money: a figure standing, the *Bather*, for which during years he had had more than ten models in his house. In a moment of impatient exasperation, he had made a frame with broom handles, instead of mandatory iron, hoping that the wood was solid enough. Occasionally, he would shake it to check, but it had not moved yet.

Deuce!, he muttered, a little fire will do it good ... The ice has stuck to it, like a real shell. The clothes creaked under his fingers, breaking like pieces of glass. He had to wait for the heat to defrost it a little, and with a thousand precautions, unwrapped it, the head first, then the chest, then hips, happy to see it intact, smiling lovingly at the nakedness of his beloved wife [...].

The stove began to roar, it gave off a lot of heat. Just as the *Bather*, located nearby, seemed to revive, under the warm breath that rose along the spine, from the knees to the neck [...]. At this time, Claude, eyes on her belly, believed to suffer a hallucination. The *Bather* was moving, the belly had shuddered with a slight wave, the left hip had stiffened, as if the right leg out was about to start walking [...]. Gradually, the statue was fully animated. The kidneys were functioning, the chest heaved in a deep breath, the arms were uncrossed. And suddenly, his head bowed, the thighs sagged, looking like the statue was alive as it collapsed in its fall, with the terrible anguish, the impulse of pain of a woman who is throws herself.

Claude under stood the end, when Mahoudeau uttered a terrible cry.

_ Oh God! This is breaking, it is falling to the ground!

On thawing, the ground had broken the very fragile wood frame. There was a creaking, as if the bones had merged. And he, from a distance with the same gesture of love he had stroked feverishly, opened both arms, risking being crushed by it. For a second, she rocked, then she fell suddenly, on her face, cut off at the ankles, leaving her feet stuck to the plate.

Eisenstein joined the group of destroyers of the statues; he is not interested to see what Zola did to the fragil splendour of the sculptural mimesis, but to

express its ideological power. Stéphane Bouquet³⁶ recovers in his memoirs what he considers is a strange wet dream relating to statues swallowed by the waters:

And stubborn rains begin to surround them.
On touching its waves, the breasts rise up.
Dark torrents sprout under the belly.
The rains fall.
And its efficient touches leave dark marks.

No wonder, therefore, that Rosalind Krauss decided to start her book *Passages of modern sculpture* with the foreground analysis of Eisenstein’s film about the Soviet Revolution, *October*, released in 1928. “The plan of a statue clearly silhouetted against a dark sky. Is the statue of Nicholas II, Tsar of Russia, which the filmmaker explores in detail as an image of imperial power. In the scene that follows this beginning a crowd rushes into the square where the monument stands. Pulling ropes tied around it, the insurgents topple the statue from its pedestal in an act with which Eisenstein symbolises the destruction of the Romanov dynasty”.³⁷ In this first scene, says Krauss, Eisenstein places the two opposing metaphors on which his analysis of history is based and the space in which it occurs: the crowd and the real space, and the enemy of the Revolution symbolised by the statue. Einstein’s inexhaustible taste for statues, qualified by Bouquet, continues in the film *October*: the presence of images of Napoleon, figures of Christ and primitive idols, and two works by Rodin, *The Kiss* and *The eternal idol* which female soldiers look at enraptured. “The pictures that Eisenstein takes of the marble versions of these sculptures resemble the soft mass of meat that the women observe with rapt, ecstatic, fascination. In this medium Eisenstein films a sentiment he obviously abhors: the cloying nostalgia for the erotic fantasies of the past” writes Krauss, who notes the irony of including Rodin in the film considering that it was the artist who first dramatically attacked neoclassical sculpture. Rilke wrote of his sculpture “each of its fragments is a unit that is so curiously striking, as possible by itself, so small in its need for entirety, that we remember that it is only parts”.

Entrepreneur of demolitions, Angel González García called León Bloy. In a letter to Rouault, Bloy told him he still needed to have cried a lot more for life. “When we die, that’s what we got: the tears shed and the tears that we caused to be shed, a treasure of bliss or terror. [...] A sculptor of great talent right now is finishing my bust. Do not forget the groove, I said, the channel that is seen under each of my two eyes”.³⁸ The feelings that classical sculpture should not express, appear, overflow and leave grooves under the eyes. When they are not swallowed by the waters and flooded by rains whose efficient touches them leave dark marks on them. Rosso chose to model the innocent laughter of children; also that of homelessness.

36. BOUQUET, Stéphane, *El libro de Sergei Eisenstein*, Madrid, El País, 2007, pp. 12-13.

37. KRAUSS, Rosalind E., *Pasajes de la escultura moderna*, Madrid, Akal, 2002, p. 15.

38. SERRA, Cristóbal [selección, traducción y prólogo], *León Bloy. Diarios*, Barcelona, Acantilado, 2007, p. 270.

Always, before the image, we stand before time, Didi-Huberman insists.³⁹ Before the image, he says, we are a fragile element, a passing element and the image is always the future, the element that lasts. Often it has more memory and more future than the being that looks at it. Could be. But what happens when we stand before the remains of an image that is not a ruin but the result of a demolition. Cristóbal Serra in the preface to the diaries of Léon Bloy retrieves a diary note by Unamuno: “From the daring freethinker, to the demolition man, who rejects all law and all tradition, some curse him and others applaud, but everyone admires him”.

Nothing weighs as much as nothing were the words of Léon Bloy’s wife when he received the last rites on the 9th February 1916. He died in 1917 But death had settled in the furrows of his face carved with languor and extreme weakness.

The pick with which José Noguero destroys his sculptures is not heavy. It is the remains which weigh as much as nothing. Nothing resists time and the demolisher notifies it, precipitating it. With great roar and poise. He notified the first demolition in 1996. The action took place in the usual room of so many other performances and develops in three stages, the first two light and change in perspective evoke the passing of time and presage the destruction of the horse’s head in modelled plaster which, from the first image, appears lying on the ground. It was a year ago that in the work of José Noguero everything collapsed. In 2000, shortly after his arrival in Berlin, Noguero goes out to the courtyard of his workshop covered by snow and sitting on a chair he photographs himself opening the hearts of a plaster figure. In one, and two moves. *Corazón* is the title of the photograph showing part of the body of a figure in clay with an open heart. In another photograph taken in 2002 the artist’s hand rests on the body of the sculpture, without notable consequences. It is the look and not touch which sees. New falls of characters modelled in wax that occupy painted scenes and then photographed. Gravitational balancing of the swing, however, gives reassurance. In 2004 the demolition man returns in the photographic diptych *Vastu I* and *II*: in the first image a canoe carrying what appear to be white rubbish bags is led by a fractured figure; the story continues in the second image, with the body of the new Ulysses broken into pieces scattered on the floor. End of story. Although the remains collected in bags suddenly appear in time in the most unexpected places, protected from schematic or forgotten dwellings, or perhaps clinging, on fragile structures. The demolition lost ground to the building of bare sets and inconsistent but appropriate appearance to place fictional narratives. In 2008 and 2009 two new photographic diptychs remind us of the demolition man: *Frage I* and *II*, and *Promesa I* and *II* are the titles. The demolition man happens to be the artist himself; we know this when he chooses to identify himself in the photograph that bears witness to its action. In 2010 Noguero, the absent person in charge- throws off a cliff from a considerable height-a naked body of a female figure made of plaster which explodes on the floor with a roar. This time he decides to videotape the sequence which he calls

39. DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges, *Ante el tiempo. Historia del arte y anacronismo de las imágenes*, Buenos Aires, Adriana Hidalgo editora, 2008.

Ton, a German term with multiple meanings, including: sound, voice, mud, clay. Crumbling episodes whose remains stick as they emerge in the convulsive rhythm of chaos that marks the origin.

But you, God, you went to the resounding end,
when beset by a swarm of neglected Maenads,
with an oh, beautiful order you quietened their cries
and on the destruction was raised your creative game.⁴⁰

V. Before time

Montaigne lived in Rome between late 1580 and early 1581; he was struck by the splendour of the papal court and the neglect and dirt of the rest of the city, full of relics everywhere: “In many places we were walking on the roof of whole houses... the truth is that almost everywhere you walked on top of the old walls that the rain and carriages left exposed”. “Those who say that at least you could see the ruins of Rome said too much; for the ruins of such a hideous building deserve more honour and reverence in their memory; this was only his grave. The world, the enemy of his long rule, had first broken and dismembered all the wonderful limbs of this admirable body, and, as even when quite dead, altered and disfigured, he was horrified to have buried his own ruin.”⁴¹ In the spring of 1585 the newly appointed Pope Sixtus V planned the spiritual and physical renewal of the city. His extraordinary Christian zeal advised to transform, demolish and remove the remains of Pagan Antiquity. It was time was to unearth and re-bury them, or at least sort them out so that, if by chance, they provoked melancholy for those that visited the city but never the horror they raised in Montaigne.

The first working stay in Rome and Naples of José Noguero was in 1993. Last year he returned to Rome as a Fellow of the academic year 2012-2013 at the Royal Academy of Spain. In his first trip his works are the witness of the impression that the sculpture of *Santa Cecilia* by Stefano Maderno caused in him, made in 1600, in marble and of a natural size for the church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. The work commemorates the discovery of the remains of the saint, one of the first Christian martyrs, in the basilica consecrated to her. Maderno presented her in the same position that the body of St. Cecilia was found, with the severed head turned in the opposite direction to the viewer and index finger of the left hand pointing to the feet. Noguero studied Maderno’s sculpture and analysed it in many different versions which he presented in his exhibition at the Luis Adelantado Gallery in Valencia in 1996. There is nothing hermetic in them.

In this second trip to Rome, Noguero returns to Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, photographs the sculpture, models it in clay and then spills a considerable

40. RILKE, Rainer María, *Sonetos a Orfeo*, I, 26, 1-4.

41. Montaigne’s memories cited in GRAHAM-DIXON, Andrew, *Caravaggio...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

amount of silicone on the holy image which causes the deletion of all those features considered non-essential, leaving the rest hardly showing, and always saving the gesture or action. He lastly photographs details of the sculpture already converted into matter that is dematerialised. I sense that we are facing a new destructive act, in any case a prior stage and that is needed to start over again. And the process is unstoppable in some of the most famous sculptural groups, who sometimes modelled in clay and others in plasticine with particular preference for the baroque. He also dare to do so with he sculptures of *Laocoon and his sons* and *Eros and Psyche*, with a tombstone in the church of San Francesco a Ripa, and the busts of a Roman patrician and Caracalla, and the head of the Innocent X himself.

Bumps, lumps, splashes and drips are the marks that the silicone glaze leaves in thick flow over the modelled sculptures. In the 1930s Fontana chose statues and decorative objects of France's Second Empire to transform them into sculptures of radical materiality. In 1951 Rauschenberg began his first works in the series *White Paintings* displayed at the Stable Gallery in New York in 1953 together with a group of blackworks painted on a background of shredded newsprint. Handmade waste, the critics called it when they saw in the white works a destructive act for no reason at all. Among the *White Paintings*, *Automobile Tire Print*, in collaboration with John Cage, and that which caused a special outrage, the *De Kooning erased drawing* was just that: a drawing by de De Kooning on which Rauschenberg acted with an eraser. In the fleeting and random footsteps of the erasing action, sits Rauschenberg's statement when he said that his paintings "collected the shadows". And so back to the origin of artistic representation in its entirety, as Stoichita⁴² studied in his essay on the subject based on the inaugural testimonies of Pliny, who refers to the primitive stage of the shadow. John Cage,⁴³ with whom Robert Rauschenberg shared a lot in those years, wrote in 1961 an article about the artist and his work, which could be read as best appropriate. Rauschenberg quotes in italics. I choose some fragments of different paragraphs. "Every look of Rauschenberg is an idea? Rather it is an entertainment with which to celebrate the lack of fixation. Why did he make black paintings, then white (coming as he did from the South), red, gold (the gold were Christmas gifts), some multi-coloured, some with objects stuck on them? Why did make sculptures with suspended rocks? Did he have talent?". "I know he put paint on the wheels. And unrolled the paper on the street. But who of us drove the car?". "*As the paintings changed, the printed materials became an issue as important as the painting (I started using newspaper in my work), causing changes in focus: a third palette. There is no uninteresting topic (any incentive to paint is as good as another)*". "The artist is not saying, he is painting. (What does Rauschenberg say?). The message is transmitted by dirt mixed with an adhesive; it sticks to itself and the canvas on which it stands. On collapsing and reacting to changes in weather, dirt thinks about me all the time. He regrets that we do not see while it is dripping". "So does someone have talent? So what? There are two for a penny. And we are



42. STOICHITA, Victor I., *Breve historia de la sombra*, Madrid, Siruela, 1999.

43. CAGE, John, *Silencio*, Madrid, Árdora Ediciones, 2002, pp. 98-108.

overpopulated. We actually have more food than people, and more art. We have reached the point of burning food. When will we start to burn art? The door is never locked. Rauschenberg comes in. No one is at home. He paints a new painting over the old. Is it possible then to keep the two, the one on the top and that on the bottom? We are in trouble (it no more serious than that)! It truly is a joy to start over. To prepare, the De Kooning is erased”.

In the works of Rauschenberg is the footprint of Cage’s commitment to Zen. It was not Cage’s desire to blame the Zen for what he did, even without his relationship with Zen never have done what he did; and he stated this. He attended the conference-readings of literature by Alan Watts and DT Suzuki, and among his reading the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* took up his attention for one year. Gita Sarabhai gave it to him who had arrived from India worried about the influence of Western music on traditional Indian music. His intention was to learn about western music to preserve the music tradition of India. For six months he studied contemporary music and counterpoint with John Cage. “He said to me: What do you charge? I answered: It will be free if you teach me Indian music in exchange. We were together almost every day. At the end of six months, just as he was leaving, he gave me the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*”. Cage said this in one of the answers to the questions prepared following the “Conference on nothing”⁴⁴ he addressed for the first time in 1949.

José Noguero travelled to India in late 2003 with the purpose of studying bronze sculpture. In the short time of two months his stay lasted, he visited the holy places in Srinagar, the painted and carved caves of Ajanta, Elephant Island Buddhist temples carved out of Ellora rock. And discovered the master workshop of Lingaraj Maharana in Orissa. In June 2005 he returned to work and lived in master Lingaraj Maharana’s workshop, where he remained until December of that year. The joy of starting over, which Cage alluded to by referring to Rauschenberg, is installed in Noguero’s learning process and in the initial moments when his work emerges. In the workshop of Lingaraj Maharana José Noguero learned the art of stone carving.

In the early years of the 1970s five copies written on palm leaves were discovered in several villages of Orissa, four of them written in Oriya and fifth in Devanagari. It is about the first text on *Shilpa or Vastu*, considered a *Upanishad* or sacred text. The term *Shilpa* covers all kinds of manual labor and *Vastu* architecture although these writings referred to sculpture, clarifies Vicente Merlo.⁴⁵ The text is attributed to the Pippalâda Kalpa of Atharvaveda and recounts a situation in which the worship of images had to still defend itself against the dominance of the Vedic ritual, which did not use them. The document, we know from Merlo, stresses the importance of the composition, the *Nyasa*, which is the main theme to represent the

44. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

45. MERLO, Vicente, *Simbolismo en el arte hindú. De la experiencia estética a la experiencia mística*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 1999.

deepest secret and the highest degree of initiation to which only masters had access, who were this after a life dedicated exclusively to achieve mastery. Pippalâda demonstrates the power of images to elevate the soul and guide it to final emancipation; and since most of the myths of creation in India are tied to space, the pictures depend exclusively on the contingencies of materials of space, never of time, which they transcend. As noted by Vatsyayan, and Merlo stated in his essay, the concern of the Indian artist focuses on the Form, on the abstract, as a design imbued with the overloaded consciousness of the totality. In this Form gives it many shapes. And the technique for each particular art is the methodology of evoking a similar psychic experience in the viewer or listener, through the impersonality of the subjective. Its content is therefore this impersonal emotion. So that the artist repeats and refines this imagery giving it specific shape in stone, sound and movement. Because all artistic creation, says B. Bäumer, “is to give shape to the formless, and somehow manifest the unmanifested. The artist to create the form, has to dive into himself, has to meditate, and the result of this mediation is *dhyânarûpa*, the meditation-form”. It is thus that Merlo sums it up, on one hand we have the human form as imitation, a cosmic or mirror image of the archetypal or divine, and the divine matrix of all forms; man is not the creator of forms but who receives and imitates the cosmic and divine shapes, and neither is he the cosmos nor the origin of all the forms by having been created and being a reflection. Therefore: only the divine is the source of all forms.

Noguero learned this in Lingaraj Maharana’s workshop. He also learned to carve the stone with the teacher, one of the best. And the joy began again when the forms emerged that mimic the image of Shiva Natarâka, as a dancing god, creator and destroyer, simultaneously, of all that is manifested. From the stone also appeared Ganesh’s trunk, and the Devadasi, wives of the gods, whose formalization have nothing to do with the Hindu representation, with Noguero being more interested in emphasizing the process of the discovery of the images in the emergence of their first faceted planes, which he then photographs and enlarges into large formats. While the small stone sculptures are housed in boxes of light. In the drawings remains the initiation process. Always accompanied by music.

In September 2006, included in the programme of the Symposium of Sculpture in Alicante, the Castillo of Santa Bárbara of that city hosted an important selection of the works undertaken by Noguero during his stay in the workshop in the exhibition *From Orissa, a meeting with Indian sculpture in the workshop of Lingaraj Maharana*.

From the experience of José Noguero’s first trip to India in 2003 and his stay in the Brazilian city of Manaus in 1997 was witness to the *Vastu* exhibition presented in 2005 at the Centro de Arte Contemporâneo of Málaga. The exhibition area, conceived as a place of revelation, welcomed “the drift of what is habitable”, as Fernando Huici was correct in saying. Fragile structures reduced to their simplest scheme reminiscent of the stilt houses of Manaus, houseboats like the barges of Srinagar, linked in space and time by the

photographic diptych *Vastu I* and *II*, and essentialised in the empty buckets of *Tu calor*. What is habitable and its movement had always been present in the work of Noguero, from the beginning. Remember now how the canoes in his first photographs housed sculptures, as if they were tombs; or pointing to the inevitable movement of every narrative, before being available for the journey to a new Ulysses.

VI. Journey to the earth

“Rome is the only place for an artist and the truth is that I am nothing else”, wrote Goethe to his friend in Weimar, Charlotte von Stein. And so it was certified by who was his best guide around the city, Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, to Johann Heinrich Merck on 10th October 1787: “Goethe is still here; he has half become a painter, I have heard that in Rome he avidly devotes himself to drawing heads and landscapes”. Goethe did not hesitate to confide in his friend’s the progress in his drawing “I find it invaluable to draw every little moment that I find, this makes every representation of things much easier [...] I was overjoyed that my drawings are sprouting a light before travelling to Naples [...] Tischbein forces me to draw since more or less two days almost every hour as he sees where I am and what I’m missing. So also happens morally, so it is in all things”.⁴⁶

With Goethe Noguero agrees in the need to talk less and draw more. “For my part I would like to finally get out of the habit of speaking, but to continue talking, but no other way than by using drawings as creative nature”. Drawing for Noguero is, as we have said, a unique method for exercising the eye and hands, and primary source of findings, the first that expresses the joy of a fresh start. Noguero draws all the time, and draws it all. Although like Goethe he feels a special fondness for trees which just like the German artist seem to be drawn easily, without any problems.

José Noguero presented at the exhibition of Barbastro (Huesca) a selection of his latest paintings, and his most recent drawings and watercolours. The tree as the sole subject. The mass of trees, which in earlier paintings took possession of the entire pictorial space, cede some of their territory that extends to the horizon in fertile brush strokes, caught up with the vigour he paints the airy bough of the trees, background of so many interspersed narrations by José Noguero. Sometimes the painting comes out of the photographic space, often coincides with times when Noguero preferred sculpture or photography. What then happens is that the containment of his scenery overflows abundantly and tumultuously in the greedy exuberance of painting, perhaps to score parentheses, scrutinise conflicts, give sound to muted noise in the vacuum of spaces where his sculptures are located, or allow himself to be wrapped, to succumb, in the chaos that, despite all efforts to tear it up, ends up organising it.

46. Letter collected in MILDENBERGER, Hermann, “Drawing of a journey to Italy”, in ARNALDO, Javier and MILDENBERGER, Hermann [curators], *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Paisajes*, Madrid, Círculo de Bellas Artes, 2008, pp. 33-42.



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This always happens in his work. If he had a larger workshop, says Noguero, he would paint constantly, but given the limitations the return to painting happens when he needs to release tensions or dream that he is precipitating himself into the catastrophe that the canvases advertise.

It happened in 1998, one year before moving to Berlin, where he still lives. Painting, then, jumped on the stage of the photographs to serve as a backdrop to the carved figures in plaster, despite these being fragmented, showed their determination to move forward; even if it is in the dark. Those pictures, with mythical scenes of hunting and Bacchanalia, became independent of photography. The current paintings are landscapes, sometimes only trees, as we have said, built from direct blows from a paintbrush that Noguero loads up with hurtful colours and applied with feverish calligraphy, almost automatically, without losing the dialogue with the painting as he paints, oblivious to any other story than that of the painting itself, for what he paints is a landscape reborn from the rubble which he has reduced some of his newly modelled sculptures. Two stages of the same action, build and destroy, conversely also destroy and build, argue and discover the reason for the searches tested in all his previous work, so interested in reporting the emotional grief, the anxiety and uncertainty in the sculptures, always expelled to the margins, as if determined to rescue in their lost looks the revelation of something that is about to happen.

We are witnesses of what we see; has written Andrés Neuman. And is it to do with opening the eyes “to experience what we do NOT see, what we now DO NOT see”? As Didi-Huberman proposes: “When seeing is losing, everything

is there". It is therefore advisable, to stop seeking wanting to know where the images look at with the unique spirit of filling our expectations. But this is also what José Noguero wants from the viewer, an active gaze before an empty space, in which nothing happens but, however, is extraordinarily lavish in revelations. The built look he proposes looks to exercise ours through a complex system of filters of an optical and scenic nature that increase narrative tension, even when this appears suspended in space that is always dense and in tension, because his true condition is always mental.

In setting out to places to look at, José Noguero teaches us to look. All remains in waiting in stage boxes he builds, the set designs and those of his own workshop, where the narrative actions that the photograph is witness to are developed. His workshop, a place of continuous transformation as the receptacle of sedimentation of the past and future times. Much has been made of silence in Noguero's work yet with Cage, I am convinced that there is nothing of this which we call silence. There is no silence in the work of José Noguero and so he makes it clear with his painting to those who remain deaf before the empty spaces of his photographs, infected by ads, revelations, omens and expectations.

There is no place for anecdotes, nor for conclusive stories. The image of the boat, present from the beginning of his career, announces the sinking of the journey. Isolated or stranded alongside fallen figures, it also supports its load; it acts as a cabin, home or grave and leads the debris to an unknown destination. The sculpted bodies with archaic modelling, so expressive in their nudity, lie on the ground, are driven to extremes, they fit into the vertigo of the swing, or are turned into debris when its author undertakes the task of demolition. Debris that Noguero collects in rubbish bags and places in the barges with no destination. Everything comes down. The future is in the image of the tree.

In the foliage of the trees, our childhood and even more distant past begin to dance a festive round [...] The colours blend their twinkle [...] We feel that we merge with pleasure to the depths of being, we transform, we dissolve into something for which we have no name, no thought.⁴⁷

Ángel García González tells⁴⁸ that in the autumn of 1938, during a storm, lightning struck a large tree that was in the garden of the house of André Derain in Chambourcy, revealing, under the roots, a clay pit. Since the end of World War I, Derain had given up sculpture that had begun very early, around 1906. "Until his death, almost in secret, he never stopped fondling that clay wonderfully brought to light by light".



47. Novalis cited in DURAND, Gilbert, *Las estructuras antropológicas del imaginario*, Madrid, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005, p. 232.

48. GARCÍA GONZÁLEZ, Ángel, "La zanja luminosa", *op. cit.*, p.103.

nada es estatua

José Noguero

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Universidad de Zaragoza
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