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FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER

The Free Art of Carmen Giménez Cacho

All art is like allowing the advent of the truth of the being as such to happen, and for that reason, it is, in essence, poetry. The essence of art, upon which . . . both the work of art and the artist rest, is putting truth into operation.¹

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All photos, courtesy of the artist.



In a Sea of Words, 61 x 1.88 cm, 2011 (triptych, oil on canvas).

In her works, the figures appear vacillating between continents and genders; they are placed amidst phrases and groups of words tattooed in the background of the canvas.



Not That Sure, 22 x 24 x 22 cm, 2017/18 (stoneware with oxides).



A Drag, 90 cm, 2010
(acrylic on canvas).

Objectness clearly shows how the separation of the skin, intimately related to the separation of worlds, of maps, of genders, opens up a space for other textures, other substances.

Carmen Giménez Cacho (Mexico, 1957) understands art as freedom. It is through it that she has brought into play the word in her work: explosively, abruptly, poetically.

Language bursts into her work, crossing the medium. This arises out of a process of internal struggle in which duality seeks to connect and create links that translate into new visions of identity. Texts appear in her work, emerging from that which has been marked inside, on the skin, in the psyche, and that suddenly breaks the fabric to emanate in cascades of words and create an evocative, intriguing, disconcerting visual image.

The phrases, often underneath the corporeal image or written on the surface of her sculptures, are only sometimes legible. The reason for this is that for the artist, words have the power to injure, to erode, to mark, and to crush, and that's why they have been put away. However, speech inevitably bursts in as part of a quest for identity, the product of a reaction to those introspective migratory processes that are a constant in her



Never without You, 70 x 40 x 40 cm, 2018 (stoneware and oxides).

life —after all, she has lived alternately in Spain, Mexico, and Canada. She expresses these processes in her work as an affirmation of her femininity, of her tri-national identity, and of her condition as an artist, situated above the rationality characteristic of the first years of her career.

The power and great expressiveness of these outbursts can be seen from her earliest works, which she developed with photographs of cracks and trees from which plants, mushrooms, and living organisms emanated, with structures that she used later to create sculptures and paintings.

While in the first years of her career, Carmen Giménez Cacho worked from abstraction, today,



Urban Patterns, 2006 (mixed media).

These creatures bring with them autobiographical stories seeking



Not Alone, 35 x 25 x 25 cm, 2017 (stoneware with oxides).

elements to integrate into themselves, while others carry a burden.



Here and There, 40 x 50 cm, 2016 (acrylic on canvas).

she is making figurative pieces in which the human figure abounds: beings that are (initially) androgynous, often hairless, that might represent any subject, but that speak imminently of her. These creatures bring with them autobiographical stories seeking elements to integrate into themselves, while others carry a burden. They are represented as bearers or beings pulling something. What is it they are transporting? Perhaps it is the weight of what you carry with you when you migrate; in a broad sense, culture, and in a more intimate sense, the past that every subject carries with him/her.

The weight that the beings in Carmen's works bear, both in sculptures and pictures, is repeatedly expressed using language. Words are a fundamental part of what subjects carry within themselves in their bodies when they migrate, and they allow them to both transform their surroundings and build an identity. That is why the figures also pull on something: they are pulling it toward themselves.

In these works, the figures appear vacillating between continents and genders; they are placed amidst phrases and groups of words tattooed in the background of the canvas, a part of the environment: a context of confusion between physical and semantic places. The fragmented words and phrases, which sometimes become hieroglyphics, are the result of a self-therapeutic,



Untitled, 46 x 36 x 28 cm, 2017 (stoneware, porcelain, oxides, and glazes).

The vacuum left by the incompleteness of the subject is linked in her work with the encounter with and affirmation of femininity.



On the Go, 30 x 90 cm, 2010 (glazed monoprnt on clay).



Traffic, 2016 (digital image).

autobiographical, healing, creative exercise, a process similar to automatic writing, rendering rich textures and patterns.

Over the last 20 years, Carmen has produced a wide-ranging body of work based on a process of constant experimentation with different media like painting in acrylics and oil; sketching in pastels; both analogue and digital collage; sten-

cil; and photography, among others. It is precisely based on photography that her work has become sculpture. Objectness clearly shows how the separation of the skin, intimately related to the separation of worlds, of maps, of genders, opens up a space for other textures, other substances, and constructions of a self to emanate.

Carmen Giménez Cacho has recently made ceramic sculptures that play with bright and dark tones; pieces from whose empty spaces emerge intricate guts and cables that unite and demand their own liberation. Often these pieces come in threes, speaking to us of processes and analyses about subjectivity. The gap opened in her pieces in the last analysis relate to the awareness of the mutability and process-based nature of the self. The vacuum left by the incompleteness of the subject is linked in her work with the encounter with and affirmation of femininity: today, the beings that at first were androgynous and hairless have taken on a more patently feminine charge, as they are containers, receptacles, figures that embrace the vacuum. This is how language's connecting function plays a relevant role in the artist's work, since at the same time that it asks about identity in its evocative, constant production, it forms networks in the apparent schism of subjectivity. **MM**



Cracked, 2003 (digital photograph).

Notes

- 1 Martin Heidegger, *El origen de la obra de arte* (Madrid: Alianza, 1996), pp. 111-112 (translation by Heather Dashner).