

Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all maya, illusion?
Walt Whitman

Where Edson Luli, with extreme precision, dissects space and time, leaving the viewer to use their own body, all their senses, to be confronted with themselves and get to know who they really are and why, there is a doubt that arises.

It is not illusion, or attention. Although space, time and language do not make sense, or at least, are not the same for every one of us. So what? Incommunicability is a common sentiment; having to deal with is subjective. We can see the ways in which Luli learnt, appropriated, and adapted these rules to himself, and at the same time we can see how we would have dealt with them ourselves. It is like this that we go about scanning the endless expanses within and beyond us, in a hypnotic yet slow and measured journey, which becomes the breadth of sophisticated works, in character with the artist's creative style.

It Begins with You and Me demands that we accept the possibility of taking a break from unbelief and demands that we let ourselves go, and to examine such possibility under the lens of perception, with the aim of discovering peculiarities which could at first appear irrelevant, but which reveal the depth of Luli's visuality, as well as shortcomings that are not always recognisable or recognised, which separate us from all that is near us. We thus find ourselves in the vortex of the here and now, but, in slow motion and at the microscope, the many superimposed realities create, one after the other, a short circuit. These lock us up into cages full of interesting things, though these are not remotely true – the product of a socio-anthropological conditioning that is more or less visible.

The way in which Luli has imagined his works directly influences the position of the viewer in relation to them. It is not easy to establish if their function depends on our perception, or if it disturbs them. We are however allowed to imagine two paths creating a relational matrix between two fundamental relations, necessary to situate and perceive the exhibition, even from a historical perspective. On the outside of each path are distributed dialectically combined concept like ideas, reality and representation.

It is legitimate to ask whether the significance of works like *It takes Two to know One* and *Fragmented Chairs produce fragmented Thoughts* resides in the gestures and in the processes that take place while they are being exhibited, or they are guided by a conceptual map, an experiment that Luli sets up. To distinguish the object, we can – or perhaps we must – necessarily consider the works in question as the result of an interaction between ideas and action. In this way, we can go beyond the mere description and understand their aesthetic magnitude, their nature and the quality of the processes involved in the making.

With powerful poetics and sophistication, *It takes Two to know One* puts us before an ordinary object and leaves us no room to escape. Leaning vertically on a wall, an old mattress dominates the foreground, leaving a tiny aperture to gaze at details of modern paintings in the background. "*Times seems to be passing. The world is happening, moments take place, and you stop to take a look (...)*". There is a bright light, a sense of precisely organised things: the mattress is a double, the subjects of the paintings on the background are always paired up, the neon shouts that *without two we can't know one*, and it inflicts so much awareness of this that the onlooker will annihilate, with more conviction, the ways in which things are possible rather than their reasons or their meanings.

It doesn't mimic external reality, but rationally highlights inner connections – that is, the relational dynamics that each of us perceives as meaningful in the infinitely haphazard intermingling that makes up reality. By directly referring to the viewer, the work stimulates a simultaneous recognition of the verified codes of reality and of the ordinary, as well as a critical and personal rearrangement of elements and relations: “Are you realising that your chair is about to break?”. In both works, the audience acts as a spy observing these objects conditioned by their own private history; the audience has the opportunity to choose whether to participate to the works' attentional control, or to leave. We can thus read them as an ensemble of conceptual schemes, with a preparatory and educational value aimed at future behavioural experiments.

Without promoting a univocal vision dictated by an isolated viewpoint, and by approaching, on the contrary, an (in)coherent and vibrant multitude that is part of contemporary life, these works contribute, together others in the exhibition, to the creation of a new narrative that could be defined as real because of its immediacy. If we comprehend the link between reality and representation, just like it exists dialectically within works like, it can be seen clearly that, oftentimes, what is perceived as immediate, is just a cleverly mediated relationship between experience and medium.

As much as *Looking through a translucent Surface* engages reality – and reality could be understood or imagined beyond its representation – it is also true that much depends on the masterful techniques of representation employed by Luli. The person animating the video is just a body, a real body that interrupts the ordinary flux by means of its ability of establishing relations with the external, of offering itself to the gaze of the other, or revealing itself. There is a consumeristic redefinition of relationships at stake, although we might ask who is the subject of such restructuring – tradition, perhaps? Not at all. It is the individual, flesh and bone, who pays the price, the individual immersed in a tradition or a culture that demands the most extreme adaptability from them. That is, in the very act of its fundamental activity-interactivity, materialised before and in relation to *organism-as-a-whole-in-environment*, allowing the experience of the exhibition to emerge, as well as its biases, through a figurative model that gives a space to discover and acknowledge one's own impressions within a uniform image. Such is the biosocial image of humans – here is why we should not be surprised if Luli, with the work *Life-Death*, pays homage to Friedrich Nietzsche, according to whom: “*Everything straight lies and all truth is crooked.*” It is because the coal in the midst of the circular continuum between life and death is effectively a contemporary framework of reference that imposes a process of memory and critique of the present. Yes, it will be terrible, but let us not be fooled by the derogatory meaning of this word. On the contrary, let it be reminded that Søren Kierkegaard, in his *Diary*, wrote: “*anxiety is the first reflection of possibility, the blink of an eye, however, it possesses a terrible spell*”. It will thus become evident that having a body means being in communication. We must recognise that in our hyper-modern society, culminating with the computerisation of social life, we find ourselves living in a mass condition with growing knowledge, preferences, and expectations that we are quick to adopt and remove without an effective action of sociocultural rooting. The consequence is thus inevitable: the questioning of a possibility to be passed on between generations and to persist throughout history. A rather awkward situation, don't you think? Though language has always been around us, since the beginning. The difference between then and now is not about sophistication, as much as it is about space; the space in which it exists, and the space imagined as such. In this sense, *L'assenza delle parole nella struttura del silenzio* [*The Absence of Words in the Structure of Silence*] is emblematic, because in an era of domestication of life – a very loud one – we fear silence. A silence that is not empty, nor is void, but is richness and relation, in connection with its surroundings. Therefore, let us not

concern ourselves with whether there will always be *awaiting [our] attention*, and with anything that will be around us to steal our attention (*including this*).

Before loudness and speed come back, before sliding back into life, let us be concerned with what we are looking for. Generously, Luli warns the viewers directly (*What are you looking for?*). Maybe everything, maybe nothing. The answer, which transcends the question, will come spontaneously, because, despite all, *IT (must) BEGIN(S) WITH YOU AND ME*.

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