

eng

KUNST

HALLE

LISBOA

BOA

Amalia Pica

Memorial for intersections

09.11.2013 - 02.02.2014

Avenida da Liberdade 211 - 1º esq

1250-194 Lisboa, Portugal

www.kunsthalle-lissabon.org / info@kunsthalle-lissabon.org

Kunsthalle Lissabon presents Memorial for intersections, the first exhibition in Portugal of Argentinian artist Amalia Pica. Assuming a temporal dimension, the project now being presented includes a set of three sculptures that will be displayed individually throughout the three months the exhibition will last. The dates in which new sculptures will be on display are December 5th and January 2nd.

Exploring different media like sculpture, photography, drawing, text, interventions in public space or performance, Pica's practice has used motifs like megaphones, microphones, antennas, flags, among others, which can be directly linked to actions such as speaking, writing, receiving, or presenting, thus developing a reflection on the way we communicate and exchange information with others.

In $A \cap B \cap C$, a project Pica presented earlier this year at Museo Tamayo in Mexico City, and more recently at Herald St., the artist's gallery in London, a group of performers pick up geometric perspex shapes that line the wall of the exhibition space, and arrange them into a composition in front of the audience. The compositions thus created are not determined in advance by Pica, who only established as a rule that no more than one shape can stand alone at any one time. This rule is derived from the field of mathematics known as set theory, which gives the work its name: a reference to the places where A and B and B and C intersect or, in this case, where the different perspex shapes intersect as a result of the action of the performers. $A \cap B \cap C$ also functioned as a performative manifestation of sorts of the Venn diagrams that Pica used in Venn Diagrams (Under the Spotlight), a work presented in 2011 at the Venice Biennale and investigating a specific episode in the history of the use of such diagrams: the prohibition of its use during the Argentinian dictatorship of 1976-1983. Pica speculates that the ban was due to the fact that they enabled the representation of the concept of cooperation.

During the presentation of $A \cap B \cap C$ at the Tamayo Museum, the performances were documented photographically on black and white film, an inappropriate medium to record the colors of both the perspex shapes and their intersections. This documentation is at the origin of the set of sculptures now being presented for the first time in Kunsthalle Lissabon. Being an exercise of subjectivity, since Pica had to imagine the colors of the shapes, hopelessly lost in the documentation process, Memorial for intersections suggests stories of avant-garde and abstraction, of rise and fall of utopias. These are memorials for ephemeral moments, for episodes and images that lasted only seconds but in which forms did represent and effectively create cooperation between individuals.

Amalia Pica was born in Neuquén, Argentina in 1978. She lives and works in London. A selection of her recent solo shows includes: Herald St, London (2013); Galerie Johann König, Berlin (2013); List Visual Arts Center, MIT and Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago (2013); Kunsthalle St Gallen (2012); Modern Art Oxford (2012); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2012); University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (2011); Microphones, SKOR, InKijk, Amsterdam (2011); Malmo Konsthall, (2010); Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam (2010); ALONGSIDE (two person with Leonor Antunes) MARC FOXX, Los Angeles (2009); Robinson Crusoe, Centro Cultural Montehermoso, Vitoria-Gasteiz (2008). A selection of groups shows featuring her work includes: When Attitudes Became Form Became Attitudes, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit e CCA Wattis, San Francisco (2013); Artificial Amsterdam, de Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam (2013); Ruins in Reverse, Tate Modern Project Space, London and Museo de Arte de Lima (2013); Au Loin, une île!, Fondation Ricard, Paris e FRAC Bordeaux (2012); ILLUMInations, 54th Venice Biennale (2011); Unresolved circumstances: video art from Latin America, The Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach (2011); Weltraum/Space, About a Dream, Kunsthalle Wien (2011); Testing Ground, Zabłudowicz Collection London (2011); With Words Like Smoke, Chelsea Space, London (2010); Buen viaje, Hayward Gallery, London (2010); Every version belongs to the myth, Project Arts Center, Dublin (2009); Pete and repeat, Zabłudowicz Collection project space, London (2009); Word Event, Kunsthalle Basel (2008); Drawing typologies, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2007). Pica was recently nominated for the Future Generation Art Prize 2012.

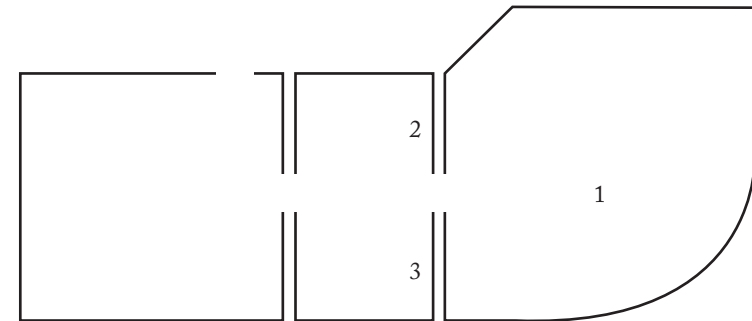
introduces anomalies which I think emulates the way memory works. I was also interested in playing on that celebratory function of sculpture, which is the memorial, which again points to the unique quality of each intersection that the sculptures are based on.

It is interesting that you mention the celebratory nature of memorials. Not only do they celebrate a past event, they project it towards the future, but not any future, an imagined one. In a way, a memorial always projects a (relevant) past event into a projected future, so one can think about memorials in terms of the present mediating past and imagined future through sculpture. This temporal transition seems to be enacted somehow by the exhibition through the display of the sculptures. There are three Memorials that will be shown individually over the course of the show, thus going beyond the traditional arrangement of objects in space. They will never intersect, so unless visitors come three times, they will only have a partial view of the show. In a way one could say the show still keeps part of the performativity that inhabited $A \cap B \cap C$. What interested you in this time-based display proposition?

This was a direction for the set up which was a result of a conversation in which we were indeed trying to re-inject the performativity into the sculptures. I think it is a way of pointing towards the uniqueness of each composition and to their multiplicity at the same time. This is also enhanced by the presence of two of the black and white photographs in the space, which portray two further compositions which will never be present in the exhibition in sculptural form. So I see the show as a celebration of these unrepeatably moments but also of their proliferation.

We have been talking about dreams and imagination, utopia and modernity, realism and the future. Do you think these terms make any sense when discussing and thinking about your practice?

Our discussion was triggered by the work in the dream, we tried to guess what that mean, maybe we failed by trying to link it to these terms or even interpret it.



1

Memorial for intersections #2, 2013
colour coated steel and coloured perspex
200 x 220 x 94 cm
08.11 - 30.11

Memorial for intersections #1, 2013
colour coated steel and coloured perspex
184 x 220 x 114 cm
05.12 - 21.11

Memorial for intersections #4, 2013
colour coated steel and coloured perspex
180 x 200 x 85 cm
02.01 - 02.02

2

Intersections #6, 2013
Ilford silver bromide fibre base
32 x 41.6 cm

3

Intersections #7, 2013
Ilford silver bromide fibre base
32 x 41.6 cm

**WORDS DON'T COME EASY
AMALIA PICA**

Conversation between Amalia Pica, João Mourão and Luís Silva, on the occasion of the exhibition Memorial for intersections, held in November 2013 in Kunsthalle Lissabon.

^{KL} **In Memorial for Intersections, the show you are now presenting at Kunsthalle Lissabon, you continue a research that had as a starting point your interest in Venn diagrams, which are used to represent simple set relationships. What triggered this interest??**

^{AP} I was in high school when I first learnt that set theory, and therefore Venn diagrams were banned by the dictatorship in Argentina in the 1970s, and this was a fact that stuck with me for years. I guess I was trying to get my head around it and to understand why. I was intrigued by why such an abstract notion would be seen as something that needed to be eradicated from primary school programs. It was only when I could make a link between these very abstract diagrams and how they are used to represent relationships of inclusion and exclusion between groups of mathematical objects and for that very same reason how they could become a way of illustrating social dynamics, that I felt ready to use this in my work. After all during that same period, gatherings of citizens were also closely monitored and seen as potentially subversive.

It became a bizarre indication of the potential for thought contained in a model, and its relationship to enunciation; which was something that I was exploring in my making: how a model (very significantly an image) is a way of illustrating a thought but also possibly the reason why the thought can occur in the first place. Can a thought exist outside a system to express it? I am interested in this question in not such abstract terms but in the way this plays out in human existence, in a very concrete manner and this is why this episode was a perfect point of departure.

That interest led you to Venn Diagrams (Under the Spotlight), a very straightforward piece in which you articulated these ideas. We remember seeing it in Venice in 2011 and instantly being catapulted into this long conversation about how an image (a Venn diagram) illustrating a mathematical concept (that of intersection), by allowing the expression and the representation of an idea that extended outside the field of mathematics (like cooperation), was perceived as a nuisance by a political regime. But you continued this research in a more performative way, didn't you?

The piece you are referring to explored a very particular relationship between image and text. Venn Diagrams (Under the spotlight) consists of two theater-like lanterns projecting two overlapping circles of light onto the wall. The lanterns are hooked to two motion sensors that are triggered by the presence of visitors and make the piece come to light, so it had a very specific relationship to the human body in this way. The image appears to be a very abstract play of light and it is only upon reading the caption which is written with pencil on the wall (it tells of the historical anecdote I referred to before) that those images go from being two abstract circles to becoming Venn diagrams and a metaphor for social interaction.

I wanted to extend this idea further by emancipating it from the text and therefore from this particular episode in history. That was the main motivation behind $A \cap B \cap C$ which is an installation with a very strong performative component and which assigns this function that the text had in the previous work (to carry the image from abstraction into narrative) to the presence of a group of performers. The installation is a bunch of geometrical shapes, made of transparent coloured perspex, which line the wall of a space. At certain times a group of performers come in and pick a shape each and stand facing the audience. They form and hold different abstract compositions for a few seconds as if they were composing still images. The main syntactical element of the compositions is the overlapping of the shapes to each other and this is what the title expresses in mathematical language (the written form of set theory). The performers know the choreography beforehand but choose their shapes on the spot, which means that each composition they form is totally unique. Each composition is a unique testimony to their coming together in a unique way. The compositions are in this sense the place in which these four people meet.

You chose to document the performative nature of this piece in a very specific way, black and white photographs. Was there a specific reason for this? By choosing black and white film, you loose a lot of relevant information, namely the colors of the perspex shapes...

In a sense I asked the photographer to shoot black and white 35 mm photos precisely because it was an insufficient medium. The colour is such an important element in this work that it is a real loss. I wanted to emphasize that non-transferable aspect of the performative experience. And how documentation and nostalgia always stand in the way of a proper understanding of past events. This also allowed me to continue pulling from the string and make yet another group of works to try and capture or recreate the unique intersections that took place in the performance: the memorials for intersections which are the sculptures that we are showing here at Kunsthalle Lissabon. I based the sculptures on the images and recreated each composition by 'guessing' the colour and sizes of the original shapes through the photos. Obviously I could never guess the right colour so this 'error'