

**PROUST'S MADELEINE: EVERYDAY ANTHROPOCENTRISM**

**EDUARDO BASUALDO, DIANA FONSECA, DUANE MICHALS, HANS OP DE BEECK,
BERNARDI ROIG & ERWIN WURM**

But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

- Swann's Way, Marcel Proust

In Swann's Way, the first volume of Marcel Proust's heptalogy titled *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927), the main character wanders around Paris revisiting those spots that connect him to his teenage love. Overwhelmed with sadness, and after having a spoonful of tea where he had previously dipped a madeleine, memories of childhood's summer in Combray surface.

Proust invokes sensorial memory through objects which are apparently ordinary. To him recollection of this nature is much more effective than voluntary memory. Random and evoking elements allow him to connect with his memories and unite past and present through them. These are no casualties but a pursuit. That is, a deliberate action where the body in its everyday environment finds wormholes to the past.

Far from medieval anthropocentrism, which granted man a direct connection with divine plans, this exhibition pursues a more modern approach derived from the perpetual need of finding our place in the cosmos. With no control over the forces that rule the passing of time, humans either enjoy or endure an existence with a precarious balance, and that provides no certainty of the surrounding reality. It is in the realm of everyday life, of gestures without apparent consequences, where there is room to place human life in the center.

Opposed to existentialism, everyday anthropocentrism aims for introspection navigating through sensorial memory to reference the present. The essence precedes existence and thought precedes reality. The encounter with objects is unpredictable and foreign to nostalgia. Certain triggering elements in these items, which are part of the everyday landscape, will recover that missing part of us. And it will now merge with our present.

Hans Op de Beeck's sculpture *Timo* speaks about everyday scenes. Wrapped in a theatrical nature, it represents a life-size boy playing marbles. It invokes the spectator's childhood, extending an invitation to explore deeper layers of the memory. The body of the boy connects with the concept of everyday anthropocentrism in a gesture without consequences. It points us towards a place where to look for memories that we might have lost.

With an explicit reference to the body, **Erwin Wurm's** sculpture titled *Giving one the finger* focus on a part of the body which, in general, have no function in the other sculptures. The Austrian artist considers the human body as the whole entity of a human being including the physical, the spiritual, the psychological as well as the political. To him material world is only a construct, an agreed-upon representation, which needs to be distrusted. He takes pleasure in setting playful traps for our sense of reality while not making the error of wanting to understand everything. Often he incorporates his own aspirations and desires connecting with the central theme of the exhibition, that is, memories.

As in Wurm's sculpture, *Headless* by **Bernardí Roig** poses a hedonistic take on the futility of time. Dyed with irony, a series of five drawings represent a headless individual sitting casually with a skull. Symbol of Vanitas, the latter becomes an essential part of the human body, and the absence of control over the pass of time is accepted with no regret. Placed again as the main role, the body humorously revolts to the temporary nature of its destiny, and seems to find refuge in sensorial and immediate pleasure.

Life as a transient experience is approached from a spiritual perspective in *Grandpa goes to Heaven* by **Duane Michals**. A group of five photographs stage death as transition to a different plane of existence. Light and scenography is managed so the human body is addressed with the highest tenderness. Being the starring role, it is not left behind lying lifeless on a hospital's bed. It flies out the bedroom window as a whole with the soul.

In her series *Degradations*, **Diana Fonseca** references the impact of the passing of time on our everyday lives. The Cuban artist directs the attention towards accidental and spontaneous acts that affect our reality. The latter, which happens in our day-to-day, poses a connection with forgotten emotions. As if it was our own skin, scraps from La Habana buildings, which Fonseca uses in these abstract collages, speak about the deterioration of memory, and remnants of past experiences.

Argentinian artist **Eduardo Basualdo** positions the individual as a victim of overwhelming circumstances. The subject is located in the center of the conversation and bearing in mind its fragility, it's asked to dive deep into a fiction where there is a strange familiarity. The piece *Cold Heart* flawlessly represents the curatorial discourse of the exhibition. It both recreates that the same organ that moves the human body, and also directs our attention to its metaphorical attribution as repository of emotions. The latter serve as a catalyst to the memories we are trying to recover.

Things are not lost when they disappear; they are lost when you stop searching for them.

- Her Living Image, Benjamin de Prado

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Opening: Thursday, January 30th, 2020 at 8 pm. Until April, 4th, 2020.