

THERE ARE THOSE THAT PREFER TO BE OFFERED RABBIT AND GIVEN CAT (THE BAIT AND SWITCH)

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There exists a video, kept safe at a university, which shows Aldo Chaparro defending a final project for graduation. On the screen, one sees the future professional explaining the aesthetic relationship between a series of common objects arranged on a light-colored cloth hanging on the wall. The look of concern was evident on the examiners' faces as Chaparro laid out his arguments supporting his work. The objects were found in the purse of a woman assaulted a month earlier near the aspirant's workshop. After availing themselves of the cash, the thieves tossed the purse off the edge of a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Attached to the cloth are a stick of lipstick, an agenda for phone numbers, a piece of tissue paper, a cotton ball, two small rocks for good luck, an empty plastic bag, a ruler and a pencil sharpener. The video, which is not a professional recording, suddenly cuts off in the middle of the explanation. The last thing heard is the artist's voice saying that the arbitrary placement of the objects on the cloth has an established interpretation that transforms upon opening the agenda and drawing from its contents to devise a far different landscape than from that first proposed. What might have followed the interruption? Would those art academics have accepted the piece as valid as he began to explain it? What of the work's inquiry and judgment on reality does Chaparro still maintain today?

Worse than a lover of things natural, is he that reconstructs nature from the perspective of his own shortcomings. Women in the Berlin metro can be seen with their hair dyed black, adorned with the traditional raiment and knives of the Sioux. Or one might visit miniscule Parisian apartments jam-packed with bonsai trees that block the way of a clowder of cats, almost all striped like tigers, that live in that space. An oil-cloth mat covered in apples repeated to infinity would suit these people, as would plastic palm trees that grow or shrink according to the client's budget. Virtual pets might offer another suitable option – the first step on the way to acquiring a near-future, battery-powered conversation partner, capable of discussing the writings of Lacan or ideas of Beuys while the energy that feeds it lasts.

He knows that the Sioux, cats and bonsai trees are different species. That knowledge, acquired abstractly before empirically in childhood, leads one to expect all Sioux, cats and bonsai trees to be identical. And while we are at once able to attach ideal signifiers to nature, the perception we all have – that which seeks out the general ahead of the particular – impedes our ability to assimilate a concrete tool for recognition. Where then do we find difference in the cat and its representation? Perhaps by the thickness of its stripes?

Who assaulted the woman, Chaparro or the thieves? It appears doubtful that we would ever know who made it possible to truly appreciate the essence of the objects in the purse. It might have been the artist, the thieves or the woman who chose that particular shade of lipstick. This ambiguity might be similar to the events on an empty street where no one has time for appreciation. But once projected cinematically – as a still shot, capturing the passage of time – things change. The spectator is attentive. Ten minutes pass, and the camera continues to roll without movement. Soon, a dog crosses the street. The plot begins. The street gains its true meaning. It has been fixed. Who posits the concept – the street, the camera or the dog?

In Chaparro's current work, the traditional boundaries considered by most artists with their work here seem diluted. In this case, it plays out in a clever game of false naiveté, which rules that the actions of the player are limited to cutting and pasting, where it is only valid to see, copy and display. The first set of information Chaparro's pieces bestow is that of the materials used and their already defined characteristics, which precede the spectator in time and space. They were present even before the artist knew of them. Though this may seem obvious, it is not in the sense that the wonder of its discovery becomes one of the reasons to keep looking at it and devising new creations. Apart from acquiring the quality of becoming onlookers peeping through a keyhole, it seems there is little for the spectators or the player/artist can do. Even so, might there be a higher artistic aspiration to give him pause to ponder the essence of a texture?

What purpose does a tree in the middle of a golf course or a raindrop on nighttime asphalt serve? Considering the properties expected of the tree in that situation, it would matter little if it were natural or made of plastic, glass or metal. With regards to the raindrop, one can choose to appreciate it before it evaporates or filters into the pavement. One way could be to try and bring resin and aluminum face to face. A similar treatment could be applied to wood, painting it with oils and thus removing it into anonymity. The raindrop is confronted, the wood placed in its case. Have we yet begun observing solely via the medium in this situation?

We have all been in the situation of turning our backs to a television mounted in the upper corner of a bar. We have avoided falling to the temptation to see and hear an important figure whom in our daily lives we may find repulsive. We have taken care not to get dragged into a topic that under normal circumstance we would never give a minute of our time. The work of Aldo Chaparro explains this aberration to us. With a light sense of irony, he introduces us to his own virtual world, where scientific advances and the idea of a coming future are discarded from the start. It is possible to return to the original materials, but not to those that predate Adam. The purity is lost not on the path of high technology, but in the mental construct of the hope it incites. Will they want to tell us that the role of silence, of bearing false witness that art held in this process does not exempt it from responsibility, but to the contrary makes it more culpable than ever?

Chaparro's questions are directed to time – to an atavistic past where the use and decontextualization that time itself imposed upon many of its inventions may still yet be – before time bestowed these inventions with the quality of being natural objects. They are so commonplace they cease to exist. In an imaginary world of the non-artificial, there are impossible chairs, stairs that can neither be ascended nor descended, giant pencils (LIPSTICKS?) whose shape makes them strangers to themselves. In a solo show presented some time ago, Aldo Chaparro shipped his chairs thousands of kilometers to be able to show them in the exhibition hall as required. Thus the visual effect produced by the chairs in that space was not the only concept in play upon knowing that they also made a large journey to find the spectator. The image had all the elements to conjure the scene where Nosferatu steps ashore from the boat and skulks through the city with his coffin under arm. For whom were those chairs destined? Did they make the journey only for an anonymous public to view them? Might they not have had the secret intention of being sat upon by the woman robbed of her purse years earlier? This woman, studied for her material essence by virtue of the violence she suffered, is no longer a woman but is instead her objects. A woman-object transformed in the purse. She is the only one with any right to sit in the chairs, to look at herself in the mirror, to write with Chaparro's pencil (LIPSTICK?). She will be obliged not to touch the wood and only the oil paint that represents its textures. Water will not flow from the sinks in her house, nor fall from the sky during rainy seasons. Her water will be the drop of resin and aluminum, which she will look for on mornings just after rising – like Aladdin who walked in a garden of fruits made of silver and precious stones. Furthermore, all that she touches will turn to gold. Aldo Chaparro has condemned her. When he feels down, he tells himself the well-known anecdote about Picasso who liked a castle and so painted it, sold the painting and bought the castle. Where does certainty end and falsehood begin? Will there be a way to prove it?