

I speak (through) strange edges

Tania Bedrinaña

Escaping the Capture – Miguel A. López

For several years, Tania Bedriñana's work has consisted of shaping skin and hair, heads and limbs, shadows and fluids, eyes and tongues, which connect different places and times. Like a magician or an alchemist, she converts a repertoire of simple materials (paper, cardboard, pigments, and emulsions) into living bodies, soft anatomies, and floating and fragmented corporalities. Its physiognomies are, at the same time, inside and outside. A mask that is a dress that is a stain that is a hand that is a leaf that is an ear.

At first glance, her paintings, ceramics, and assemblages may seem intimate and melancholic landscapes, but it is necessary to look again - or stop seeing only with the eyes. There is something uncertain and magnetic in the way it represents as if its lines and silhouettes were open questions about how our human organisms and their affective structures become visible today. Bedriñana makes us doubt the portraits we know of ourselves: as if those images –especially those derived from photographic coding– were nothing more than fiction or theater; that is to say, a pure normative convention that produces hierarchies in the ways of seeing our bodies and showing our emotions. And given the insufficiency of these images to account for ourselves, the artist has assumed the task of reclaiming and restoring the uncomfortable sensations and strange edges that conventions have expelled from the representation of life.

In her hands, art is technology to produce anatomies that escape capture. There are no permanences, but mutations. Her work has sometimes been interpreted as an exploration of the infantile or of dream universes, possibly due to the proliferation of faces without age marks as well as chromatic atmospheres as thresholds of dream and fantasy. However, her characters go further: Bedriñana composes existences that are in a battle to escape due to the

disciplinary gaze that organizes life - the domesticating setbacks of education or the forms of medical, psychiatric, and legal surveillance over our behavior. The bodies and faces in her works do not show us existential tranquility, nor do they reveal a pathology; on the contrary, the artist disfigures the boundaries between the two. Rather than a symptom of a disease or discomfort, her work is an operation to dislodge the rules that seek to mark some lives as damaged. Bedriñana seems to try to teach us to feel border-bodies in a world that punishes deviation and in a society obsessed with constantly measuring our indices of 'normality' through small words or everyday gestures.

It is not surprising that the faces in her paintings lack definite biological features. The eye sockets appear almost always empty, the contours of the skin are incomplete outlines, and the scenes surrounding the bodies are often vaporous, dense but also diluted pigments. Many of her works return us to a previous state of life and matter: gaseous oscillations or liquid atmospheres that refute the anthropocentric arrogance with which we usually perceive our human bodies as closed, seamless, healthy, and impenetrable containers. Some of her pieces take us back in time, even before the idea of history, to imagine osmosis between bodies and other organic substances.

In this new exhibition, the artist brings together works produced mostly in the last two years, which delve into her memory of a recent visit to Peru. The colors take on a singular luminosity and the landscape claims a prominence that it has not had in her previous series, especially shapes that evoke mountains, clouds, rivers, and the force of the wind - such as *Andes* (2021) or *Zigzag* (2021). Other pieces inevitably refer to collective mourning, such as *Adiós (Goodbye)* (2020): three characters attend a wake in the middle of a reddish landscape, surrounded by small clouds, perhaps alluding to a local history of violence whose wounds do not finish closing or perhaps to the most immediate effects of the health and ecological crisis that the planet is going through.

It is also suggestive how some of her paintings, such as *Ciempies desnudo (Naked centipede)* (2021) or *Piedras y flores (Stones and flowers)* (2021), suggest stratigraphic diagrams where the layers of colors seem to dig into the skin. Bedriñana paints like someone

doing an archeology exercise, indirectly underlining that we are an accumulation of superimposed layers that contaminates its meaning. Possibly the artist's fascination with the mask is precisely associated with the possibilities of covering ourselves with layers and losing our faces, something that many people must do daily to navigate the multiple forms of patriarchal, racial, and sexual violence that make up the world. Wearing different veils, reconstructing the anatomy, and inventing a new repertoire of gestures has been how many have managed to cross the rules that discipline, classify and pathologize bodies and their behaviors. Norms that also define the possibilities of access, speech, and representation that subjects have in certain spheres. The exhibition also includes some pieces from earlier moments, both cutouts painted on paper and linen and pastel chalk drawings. The works occupy the house like lost relatives who meet again to rehearse unexpected choreographies. The artist registers emotions in movement, diffuse, in-flight, which show how we all negotiate with the place and territory we inhabit. Sensations such as imbalance or vertigo appear in tension with the ideals of calm and stability with which we have been taught to represent ourselves. Bedriñana touches and speaks the edges, the angles, and the contours. An ear that is a leaf that is a hand that is a stain that is a dress that is a mask.

Miguel A. López
(Traducción: Galería del Paseo)