

AHORA. About Primera Línea, by Fernando Prats.

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If anything characterizes Chile, both naturally and culturally, it is an indomitable energy, which works not as much as a force transported in the network but as the extreme outbreak of the animal that stretches. Geysers, tsunamis, alluviums, earthquakes and volcanoes in eruption make up the sublime feature of a culture in which nothing is considered perennial and in which, therefore, an experiment as unique as that of the democratic path to socialism could turn, suddenly, in a totally unpredictable way, towards the abject laboratory in which the first recipes of neoliberalism were tested. In this aspect Chile is a country of loose moments, ruins and crossroads, of mnemonic swirls that suddenly jam the sedative course of history. This means that their different ages are not articulated by a causal link, but by a series of mysterious sensitive correspondences. They are sediments of times that, like the one that retain the eyes of their volcanoes or the backs of their tectonic plates, suddenly agglutinate an unexpected sparkle.

To this alludes “Chile woke up”, the slogan that, starting on October 18th 2019, began to run through the streets and squares of the country like a trail, unexpectedly upholstered by a crowd that emerged from the most diverse corners to dust off a forgotten language - the language of dignity - and staging the creative moment of a destitute power. At least here is an example of how a particular moment that was considered buried or remote - that of the years of Salvador Allende and Popular Unity - joins a later one - the creative moment of the crowd - snatching a time beggar to the tedious syntax of the story. Time stops happening, and instead it becomes spatialized and shares in the immanence of a community of bodies that define from themselves the way of being together. It is the moment of politics, although this moment is also that of art, because if something shares art and politics it is precisely this game of destruction/construction of unpublished or unthinkable communities.

This is what the work of the artist Fernando Prats seems to exhibit, that work has consisted since its inception in capturing that particular moment in which certain

materials in rebellion (physical, geographical, domestic) knot each other releasing the mnemonic energy of the country. We perceive it in a palpable way in this new show, *Primera Línea*, a kind of small visual atlas in motion in which fragments of texts, images, slogans, emblems and bodies shape the hectic days of a community that shows the artistic moment that precedes both the script of the story, and that which is characteristic of aesthetic work.

The visual daily example that Prats traces -pictorial itself and articulated by means of records and video- gives the impression of fulfilling two crucial objectives in this way: undressing on one hand the raw visuality that during Chile's revolt forges intervened monuments, the fire of the barricades, the cobblestones torn from the sidewalks, the rewritten flag and the fighting bodies as part of a performance practice that is anticipated when making the artist's singular, and showing on the other hand that the extreme energy that his own work liberates is not part of the muse that visits the creator in silence, but the underground power of some images of the confines of a creative multitude. This shows Prats as a determined friend of those who fight for their rights, and not of those who defend their privileges.

This friendship, however, is not limited to a personal affinity, because the purpose of his work lies in affirming the idea that art has always really been on that side, pushing to break into a space that discovers it. That is why what *Primera Línea* contains is a succession of art actions mounted by the experienced fisherman of fantastic pearl passengers. They are mute minerals and boiling materials, silent pieces that the artist, as a cemeteries ripper, exhumes in order to substantially rewrite history.

Hence, the look of Prats is directed this time (he had done it years ago with Tatio geysers, the desolate Salar de Atacama or the extreme and remote Nazca Plate) to the blank pages that speak on the dirty walls of a new Constitution, to the national flag painted with slogans about the future or to the stones that serve as improvised and precarious defence. The smoke, the spray, the stencil, the scratches, the hoods, the bells, the plastic and the detritus assemble the physical community with which Prats elaborates a new type of stain: neither that of the avant-garde informalist that in the Chile of the

sixties occupied the stain to inform the political contingency in his paintings nor that of the neo-vanguard who placed it during the eighties as a figure of the singular secretion of a body, but that of the ghost that's infiltrated in the ranks of a creative community in order to rescue the power of its spontaneous pictoricity.

This pictoricity, collected by Prats as interruptus of the monotonous domestic passing, abbreviates the suspense of the hierarchies that history had naturalized and receives a new data. One that serves to point out with expertise, as Foucault, the instantaneous replacement of a chronogram of the revolution on the spatial map of a constellated series of resistances. It is not a resistance that is characteristic of him or his object - the *Primera Línea* - but of one in which the classic boundary between the rearguard and the avant-garde is simply diluted. In the *Primera Línea*, it could be affirmed, in fact, that it is also the last line, in terms that it is no longer reduced to glimpse the salvific passage on the horizon towards which the people must mobilize than to protect, to this same people, from the fierce onslaught of police forces.

It is Prats' way of showing that art and politics guard each other within an undifferentiated knot. From this knot the artist does not participate as a mere witness; on the contrary, he becomes part through his work. And that is why among the mapuche flags, the green flags of feminism, the pages of the old fascist constitution trapped with smoke or graffiti that disrupt the official language of power in statues and memorials, appears overlapped, in offset version, the symbol that Prats devised to raise the logic of equity: a small circle that decompresses the abusive weight of the centre bringing the marginal and extreme zones closer to each other.

This sign of his (worth considering) does not appear as a guide or as a vector, it appears only as a member of the prodigal tribe of replicating signs. It is the hallmark of the investigating artist, who thus says goodbye forever to the ancient art of awareness and its subsequent relational becoming. Mediation is absent, and so art returns to be another piece of the assembly that expresses the eternal in the exceptional detonation of now.