

DESTIERRO

Daniel de la Barra
Curator Alicia Chillida
Galeria Joan Prats
30.06 - 29.07.2022

¿Se hubiera oído la guitarra si su sonar no abriera desde el primer instante el modo justo de escuchar? [Would the guitar have been heard if its sound didn't open from the very first moment the right way to listen?]

Saber tratar con lo sagrado cuando hace falta una máscara, cuando hace falta callar a tiempo. Saber de conjuros y de exorcismos, poder descender a los infiernos una y otra vez y hasta saber morir en vida todas las veces que haga falta. Y sobre todo saber tratar con lo Otro en sentido eminente. [To know how to deal with the sacred when a mask is needed, when being quiet in time is needed. To know about spellings and exorcisms, have the power to descend hell again and again until knowing how to die when living as many times as it's needed. And overall to know how to deal with the Other in an eminent sense.]

María Zambrano

The inhabitants from the *Terres de l'Ebre* coexist in a threatened territory. Daniel de la Barra first visits the heart of the Ebro Delta, in 2021, as a guest of *Centre Lo Pati* to accomplish an artistic residence in Balada, next to anthropologist María Faciolince. The project reflects on the reconstruction of the landscape's narrative, one that keeps on sustaining and perpetuating the industry's extraction practices. It compounds a register based on images about socio-environmental violence of a political and historical nature with reminiscences to the botanic expeditions that consolidated the ways of seeing the natural as a potential land of conquest. As references, the artist uses the botanic expedition illustrated books, the paintings of traveling artists in Latin America and the Romantic Landscape paintings from XVIII and XIX centuries.

The exhibition in Joan Prats Gallery is the result of translating these researches to an art installation that combines diverse medium: painting, sculpture, poetry, music, video, documents... A new ecosystem recreated through the artistic field. The representation arises from a need to give an answer to a complex landscape dominated by political, economic and social forces, that contribute to its (de) structuring. This territory subjugated him then and hasn't ceased to deepen in his skin, in his most profound places. He has explored his lands and, immersed in them, emerges the fundamental encounter with its people. Prove of this is the tight collaboration with Josep Pinyol, Luís Martínez's composition and musical interpretation in the Santa Bárbara's church organ, and the poems recited by Miquel Curto, in Tivenys.

The author films and photographs the territory bodily, as it was reflected itself in a negative mirror. He transfers his voice to that *Black Flags*, one of the devices used in the Delta to scare away migratory birds, now subverted as resistance messages: : *Este ilusorio vuelo inverso escapa de las bombas hacia la superficie silenciosa del otro lado...*[*This illusory flight escapes the bombs to the silent ground on the other side...*]. An earth furrow is present in the sample, just how it can be found in the Delta's rice fields; the author recalls Walter de Maria's gesture in *The New York Earth Room*, 1977, a gesture that elevated her to the artistic field; what better way of dignifying her. On the ground we find paintings placed as *art nouveau* carpets that allude to the presence of nature in urban life. They represent two types

of autochthonous plants that are essential to the Ebro's wetlands, the salicorns and crassulaceae. Two species produced by the ecosystem to maintain its own balance. As in a big historical canvas, we witness the current conflict between agroindustry and ecology.

¿How to make this land sustainable? The Delta is one of the most important wetlands in Europe, in which there have been developed several investigations, directed by biologist Lynn Margulis, that show the presence of a bacteria that matches with that which 2.000 million years ago populated the Earth, essential data to evolutionary microbiology. Science has been warning us for decades of the dangerous consequences of our model of unlimited growth and extraction, and the need for change. In our country, Jorge Riechmann is one of the voices who has most lucidly delineated the profile of this ecosocial crisis. He maintains that *preocuparse por cosas que nos desbordan es un arte que debe cultivarse como imposibilidad* [worrying about things that overwhelm us is an art that must be cultivated as an impossibility] (Ed. Ardora, 2022).

Josep Maria Mallarach, another critical voice in front of the environmental policy of the Ebro wetland, defends this landscape as one of the sacred natural spaces within the technologically developed countries. He sustains that the principal threat to the permanence of the Delta is due to the fact that all the large dams and reservoirs in its basin retain about 90% of the sediment. Also, the developing of the irrigation in the middle basin (an arid area of Aragon) diverts a large part of its flow. As a result, the delta is suffering a strong regression. The hydrological plan for the Ebro basin -as denounced by ecologist NGOs and the New Water Culture - does not correct these threats, but otherwise adapts to the pressures of hydroelectric companies' lobbies and intensive agriculture. The second major threat is the global sea level rising caused by the melting of the polar ice caps as a result of the global climate crisis caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases.

The last paintings in the exhibition illustrate the cartography of *Terres de l'Ebre* from a satellite view, through tenebrism style they compound a sort of dead nature still-life. And the songbook, the ballad composed by the artist, has been transformed into a counterpower, language and music are his weapons, and it goes like this: *Como un canto de amor perdido, que cuestiona los modos de habitar y mirar este paisaje, un amor arrebatado, sin sedimentos, con las herramientas de control y las funciones que ejerce la práctica visual contemporánea para perpetuar los patrones de su espectacularización.*

[As a song of lost love, questioning the ways of inhabiting and looking at this landscape, a love taken away, without sediment, with the tools of control and the functions that ex that exercises the contemporary visual practice to perpetuate the patterns of its spectacularisation].

Daniel de la Barra is currently a resident in the Academia de España en Roma. The collaboration starts there; it is there where artist and curator decide to develop this project. They travel to the Ebro estuary, he from Rome and she from Madrid. *Coincidentally*, on their journey they both read María Zambrano, he reads *La Razón Poética*, she reads *Claros del Bosque*, and they travel for days through the expatriated and exiled territories of the Ebro Delta.

Alicia Chillida, June 2022

In collaboration with Real Academia de España en Roma, Fundació Sorigué, Lo Pati Centre d'Art Terres de l'Ebre and Sala d'Art Jove in Generalitat de Catalunya.