**Some Migration Techniques**

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There is some architectural engineering in all of Irma Álvarez-Laviada’s works. Something of an apprentice and an inventor, and a lot of a building animal. I often think about it when I am in front of her works, and I glimpse that same diligence and skill with which birds make their nests. Humility above action. That minor architecture that flees stable and established powers and knowledge to speak of the power of bodies and things, of the immanent movement in which we are always involved; of what allows us to name what we intuit but cannot handle ― what is also known as a novel’s architecture.

Still, I consciously use the word ‘architecture’ while thinking of Robin Evans and Gordon Matta-Clark, two people who, located on each side of the Atlantic and with very different intentions, thought about the paradoxes of what is ordinary and about that very ‘becoming’ that constitutes the immaterial substance of buildings. So did John Hejduk, who always recognized himself as incapable of thinking about a building without constructing the entire repertoire of characters, stories and languages that accompanied its deployment and sustained its intensity. And Piranesi, while pursuing that spatial thread that writhes without breaking, embracing escapes and impossible beginnings in its apparent confinement. Or, more recently, Junya Ishigami, who has approached those forces that characterize what is minor by paying attention to the most insignificant signs of matter, an expression of a deeper and more dynamic, light, and subtle reality, opening the spatial to the unusual, to the unheard of, where power borders on emptiness.

In fact, that idea of what is minor was included by Kafka in his diaries. There, he wrote about those small literatures with which to recognize the value and richness of those forms of expression that develop in “the narrowness of space” left by grand narratives. We could say the same about this exhibition, which also seeks to *minoritize* right from the title: *Aquí no hay nada que mirar* (*There is Nothing to Look at Here*)*.* In doing so, Irma Álvarez-Laviada seeks to expand the reality with which we work, to understand that the real is not only the immediate, measurable, and representable form of official language, but that it also implies other types of forces ― often invisible and often uncontrollable, but always decisive in the composition and use of spaces.

Here, the space is a Fine Arts Museum. The side that cannot be seen: those grids of the deposit that José Carlos González ― a carpenter by profession ― once built, where the works of art rest away from the viewer’s gaze. It is a specific and atypical construction, as peculiar as those made by less sociable birds: designed for rest. A structure that the artist reproduces in the exhibition halls now as a sculpture, launching a rereading of that invisible but essential museum in its perfect life cycle. It does this by building both structures of understanding and tension, considering the physical forces that take place in them. Like a large skeleton, it functions as a rib cage, where the heart and lungs of this great artistic heritage are housed. The gesture is an invitation to see that architecture hidden from the visitor, although not only that. It also opens the door to taking us out of indifference, reorienting our gaze, and getting involved in those other perceptual dimensions traditionally ignored by the discipline but loaded with potential. In other words, the function of art for Irma Álvarez-Laviada is to show how ‘what is’ is, even what ‘what is’ is, and not so much to show what it means. Art doesn’t just refer to something: it is something. A work of art is a thing in the world, and therefore both an aesthetic and moral response.

Concurrently, the artist arranges in another room a set of frames stacked on top of each other on the white wall. Stacking is, in fact, one of the best-known methods of that animal architecture that overflies this text. Stacking involves collecting the material, transporting it to the site chosen for construction, and placing it there. Even in a seemingly simple construction method like this, the patterns of behavior are quite complex. The artist goes through that sophistication as well. The empty frames, stacked in an orderly manner on top of each other, also refer to those guardian grids of works of art, but opening the gaze to everything imaginable: a few beginnings and interrupted indications that draw a game that is both kaleidoscopic and open to everything thinkable. Displaced architectures or architectures on the margins, as well as an infinite number of ramifications around them. Perhaps the place we live in?

The complexities of beauty and aesthetic choice could well be the theme of this exhibition. This idea also refers to the animal architecture that always supports the functionalist belief in the interdependence between reason and beauty. Although there are more layers and more messages. Some are as subtle as a sparrow’s blinking. Thinking about geography as a possible mode of architecture, for example. Others have the reach of oral literature ― imperious and illuminating. That anarchy of stories told over and over that infiltrate the most innocent rhythms of everyday life. Although, above all there is that idea of emptiness that Irma Álvarez-Laviada always handles with virtuosity. In the first instance: that void as a place where transformations operate, where the fullness can reach its true plenitude. Although I sense another possible twist: that other idea of emptiness that has to do with the inalterability of the world, with time, anonymity, disappearance, farewell. The conservation of things that no one preserves and that must be preserved because they have always existed. The enigma of what is there, and no one pays attention to. The life that exists beneath things. That conviction that ideas are, above all, formal elements, units of sensory and emotional stimulation. A mental architecture that serves to dissociate and to fragment as well as to indicate or to illuminate.

It is no small thing. Perhaps this is the reverse where the artist places herself so many times. That negative of a landscape, the story of which is impossible to finish, an image of which ― an intensification of reality ― she constructs. That is what Cees Nooteboom said about writing, which is always full of people who do not vigorously imitate what we call reality, but, on the contrary, use the infinite possibilities of art to betray it, subvert it, overwhelm it, or intensify it ― because, otherwise, the world would not be bearable. Writing books, just like working with art in all its forms and formats, is playing at being illusionists because the imagination has no starting point other than itself. Art does not provide answers but raises questions ― questions that it provokes. A permanent circulation space, like the highway system of ants, the stairs and ramps of termites, or that vertical communication landscape of the paper tower that wasps build.

In the works of Irma Álvarez-Laviada, vanishing lines appear that resist, not only in the face of the ideas she propagates, but also in the face of the fictions that support them. The artist inverts the geometry of normalized space in a similar way to how Walter Benjamin had shown that the myth of interiority was nothing more than a child’s play. For that child Benjamin, the disappearance of the inside of the socks seemed like a magic trick. That elusive void challenged the logical relationship between interior and exterior. It offered the possibility of infinite returns to the same game, none the same as the previous one. The simplicity of the instructions opened the possibilities and turned searching in the closet into endless entertainment. His desire to get hold of the interior repeatedly erased the same space he was looking for. This story, as naive as it may seem, offers the paradox of an interior that is liberated by the fluidity of its geometry. The same happens with the works of Irma Álvarez-Laviada; in her condensation, she makes her interiors something contingent, where emptiness is a dynamic and operating element. A vital breath. That place where transformations occur, where what is full could reach its true plenitude.

[English translation: Juan González-Castelao]