

SETTING THE SCENE

When I saw the pictures of Ingrid Luche's work, I felt like staging it. I imagine that this could be compared to the reaction of a theatre or film director who reads a script or a classic play and sees the space that he could use in rendering it and the reading that he could encourage to be made of it, in a provisional and personal manner. Also with the idea that this personal vision would not harm the work but, on the contrary, could do it good.

It would be unwise to think that a script or a classic is something absolutely fixed and also to affirm (nobody would dream of doing this in fact) that only the writer of a script would turn it into a film. It is more common, especially in the interviews that sometimes form 'bonuses' in television series, to hear the maker of a series admit that one of the actors had given his character a larger place than planned in the story—which also assumes that another was probably unable to make his character sufficiently necessary to remain in the cast for long. Writers also often admit that a director had taken the story into zones that had not been planned for it.

I can well imagine what such statements can trigger when exporting them into the art industry is considered. The tutelary figures of this production sector have the deep-rooted idea that they are the only persons capable of showing off the products. And in fact some have been fairly convincing in this rhetorical enterprise principally (but not only) in periods that are now over: Donald Judd and his foundation in Texas, Daniel Buren and his *in situ* exhibition protocols or Pierre Huyghe who is now dreaming of a 'foundation-pavilion' in which each work would have its own building. But I quite like the idea that the rules are not applied unilaterally to everybody and that the diversity of nature that characterises artworks means that they are studied bearing in mind the complexity of the criteria that may be involved in their appraisal. To adopt a thought by Salvador Dali, '*One thing that is certain is that I hate simplicity in all its forms.*'

Getting down to the facts, I have not seen with my own eyes most of the works by Ingrid Luche that I have wished to stage, but in photographs that she showed me. It was a curious experience. I sometimes misunderstood the form of a work, taking a documentary photograph for a work (an image on a computer monitor does not have an artistic character until it has settled into a form). Although I have actually seen works by Ingrid, I must say that I don't remember having seen any of her solo shows. Replying to an invitation to write about work that one knows so little makes for a curious situation. However, I imagine that the proposal must have made sense in the mind of the person who made it and, to be honest, I approach it with great interest. Whereas I do not know this work very well and as it seemed possible to show it to me in the form of simple images and shots of exhibitions, and that in addition I make no mystery of the situation, I imagined that *something special* was expected of me—and this is what happened as I felt like staging what was depicted in these images.

Staging something clearly means establishing hierarchies. This is probably a dramatic idea and equivalent to precisely admitting the non-equivalence of all the items in a corpus in the eyes of the appraiser. And I immediately thought of eliminating what went against what I wanted to see and to narrate. The fact that Ingrid Luche's work has not yet become established at the global scale on which the great artistic careers operate today perhaps shows in fact that she has taken the time to explore various pathways and that some were better than others. The Ketchup frescoes (*Sans titre (Hot Ketchup)*, 1998), the ceramic pizzas, the first embedding of strass in walls (*Stras*, 2000) and the flannel bear (*Yo Cosmo*, 2000) would probably have stimulated me at another time, and I could also have considered with compassion at another time the making of tee-shirts in *LAPS* (with Franck Scurti) shown in 2001 at BF15 in Lyons.

Finally, a whole area of what Ingrid Luche does would not have been covered in this staging (and not just for the reasons outlined above) and, looking closer, I see that these are mainly older works. But not all of them, however. The *Brume*, dated 1999 (atomizers delivering fine spray for a distance of about 15 metres outside a hospital car park in Nice causing clouding of vision) seems to form the basis for a possible entry to the work. Before knowing whether such

a mechanism does produce such effects, nothing happens other than slight *confusion*. The eye cannot adjust to this clouding like a cataract that dissolves the sharpness of a panoramic situation into a place with vague contours. In this case, the clouding was fairly precisely framed by a strip window with a view of the hills surrounding Nice and going down to the sea.

And this is precisely what I like in Ingrid Luche's work—the moment when an aesthetically structured doubt sends a signal of fine weakness to the brain.

I sometimes think that artists bear clues of their relation to art in their faces and their attitudes. When looking at them you often see the ambition, arrogance, cynicism, opportunism, error, fraud, nonchalance, agitation, sophistication, grandeur and genius which are also to be found in their work. And this is in addition to the way they dress that of course provides some further information. This is how it is. At a time when many artists apply to join the hall of fame of occasions to exhibit and gain a little renown (an entirely new situation in the history of art), 'job interviews' have necessarily acquired a number of virtues, also laying down rules not found in the ordinary business world.

Ingrid's face and body attitudes encourage this hypothesis, but here again it is difficult for the eye to focus on a sharp image. She possesses a kind of discretion contradicted by the authority of her expression, with rapid switching between submission and domination and between hesitation and certainty as if no decision—even provisional—could be taken. The only solution is to catch what one can and to get used to the idea that some areas will remain imprecise. In view of this, do not count on me to provide the keys to her work: I like the idea that there may not be any, or at least not of the instant kind made with simple summaries. Basically, I like all of her works about which the 'services for the public' at institutions would have difficulty in writing a note, putting the 'work' of the 'mediators' that the art industry has invented for itself after turning into a cultural charity enterprise.

For example, what could the *Lustres* be made to say, what *confession* would be drawn from it? What can be said about it except that it brings back to me the memory of a 1971 work by Alan Suicide (*American Supreme*—a jumble of electrical wires supplying a disparate assortment of bulbs and neon lights on

the floor in the most perfect 'scatter art' tradition)? I like their imprecise form (like that of Matthew McCaslin's light installations of the early 1990s, to which the *Lustres* is probably related), the way in which they have been made by hand because this is remote from the outsourcing production approaches that artists in their 30s and 40s have understood that it is not stupid to use, their resonance with the Christmas lights for which my fascination is still intact. These *Lustres* are very Armlederians (in fact, one of John Armleder's works consists of a tangle of neon lights on the ground): its beauty seems to well up from something natural and fortuitous—as if an electrical current had run to a few bulbs connected by cables and ready to be thrown away. Also, perhaps, their clear opposition to the precise, careful forms of current design—still playing the seduction strategies of 1950s household appliances—has something to do with what they do to me. These are works that I would like to 'stage', because a work made from household light imprints the exhibition space with constraints of semi-darkness that I like to struggle with (I liked this with *Light Bulbs* by Angela Bulloch and Felix Gonzalez-Torres' strings of lights—lights that do not require pitch darkness but dimness and that give a certain dramaturgy to the other works exhibited in the same room). I would probably show them with a new version of *On Fire*, a mural drawing made in Quebec in 2006, with falling flames and soot, inverted volutes oozing at the meeting-place between wall and ceiling like water damage, and using a fairly inexplicable number of techniques (Indian ink, wash, pierre noire, charcoal, grey pencil and graphite) to render plausible something in the order to the *confusion* mentioned above, arousing memories of much-loved works by Pino Pascali, Eva Hesse, Lynda Benglis and even Lauren Szold. A fine drawing with no explanation that would echo perhaps, in the same room, *Elastica* (2003, in collaboration with Agnès Martel), a superb polychrome spider's web of strips of latex, elastomer, rubber, nylon line, plastic and snap hooks (exhibited at La Salle de bains, in Lyons). The combination of these two works and the *Lustres* would surely *say* something about a universe woven like the underground galleries of a parasite and some formal choices in the exercise of art today.

Formal choices that would of course—as Ingrid Luche is involved—be contradicted by the geometrical rigour of the 'balconies'. If I like this contradiction (whereas I feel strongly distressed when faced with the inevitable

formal elusiveness of many up-and-coming artists and in which I see nothing more than a contemptible nonchalance adopted for the occasion and fostered by an art market with a compulsive appetite), it is because of the radical and perfect opposition of its terms. This is not a question of saying everything and anything, but tracking down the same thing in two items contrasted in every way. I say 'balconies' in fact, but a number of works that I include in this category probably do not stand out: *All Day and all of the Night* (2005), *Patricia* (2005), *Terracita* (2004), *Sydne Rome* (2004), etc., are constructions that are globally parallelepipedal, backing on to the wall and presented at different heights above the ground. An inward-facing viewpoint to which nobody has access (like interior bow-windows—long analysed by Dan Graham), a curious place for sculpture (against the wall and far from the ground), a formal exercise based on a simple element; in some, the reflective surface causes further visual disturbance, others are themselves the source of soft, coloured light. They seem to scan the history of architecture and describe social positions: the rudimentary one in *Sydne Rome* as much as that, as if sampled from 1980s architecture, of *Patricia*, reminiscent of the *Reliefs-peintures* works by Bertrand Lavier.

However, it seems to me that what *binds* Ingrid Luche's work is somewhere other than in this sculptural experiments whose influences, conscious or not, and preoccupations are in the same place as that where I am now *reconciling* myself to the art of my time. It is in her photographs—including those that I thought were works when in fact they were just documentation; some of them could be published differently in the form of a portfolio. First of all *Le Tigre* (2006) and *Le Cheval Blanc* (2006), in which I like both the perfect strangeness and the absence of precise message, and then all the others (many are shown here), where I also like the semantic complexity and the incongruity which means that in parallel I like Trisha Donnelly's photographs. Each time, something is *right* in their format, in their possible framing—and in the staging of Ingrid Luche's work I would willingly suggest to her that the number of these photographs should be increased by using those that are not yet destined to be exhibited: for example, those documenting the design and lighting of a musical evening in Poitiers in 2005. Here, the light cylinder 3 metres in diameter seems to me to have a sculptural dimension that is not far from that of *Elastica*. In each one, strangeness

gives birth to a particular form of poetry with imprecise narration that derives as much from the complexity of the subject as from the form given to it—like the pyrographic drawing on the façade of the *Sydne Rome* balcony, about which I do not want to know anything, of course, if ever it does have an explanation.

In all these works, in addition to the formal explorations whose soundness moves and intrigues me as much as the originality; I like the absence of direct narration and the space she creates for hypothetical, provisional and unresolved narration. I am clearly aware that in staging them I would choose those that precisely stand out by the non-authoritarian nature of their reading, making what is 'evasive' the tool for a possible escape. All these works are evasive in fact at one point in their semantic and aesthetic surface, with as much certainty as the part of the image blurred by *Brume*. Articulating this confusion is not the least of their qualities and neither is their putting into form.

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