

Daisy Xavier - The Fluency of Forms

By Ligia Canongia and Translation by Stephen Berg

Sculpture traditionally deals with solid bodies of concrete physical materiality. So it has been for centuries, until the moderns who started the progressive process of dematerializing mass in an attempt to transform emptiness into an active element of construction. Nowadays, the material forms of a sculpture may range from solid to liquid, from fullness to emptiness, while working with bodies in transition, materials of entropic potential which change through space and time.

The work of Daisy Xavier investigates the quality of these states, the mutant forms which bodies may take on or simulate. Starting with the "packaging" of indiscriminate materials and objects, made from nets, one arrives at a new, malleable mass made up of all those isolated and randomly grouped parts, a mass with other material characteristics, another density, another weight, through equally undifferentiated as to form.

In 1920, Man Ray wrapped a sewing machine with cloth and rope and created the sculpture "The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse", a profoundly "strange" object whose contents, enveloped by a tangle of cloth, were both unfamiliar and "enigmatic". One shape covered another, betraying its origin and limits, and together they formed a third image. In the wake of Man Ray's breakthrough, Christo wrapped the landscapes and monuments of the world, covering up the grandiose and simultaneously routine visibility of natural and cultural contours.

Simulating or dissimulating bodies, Daisy Xavier proceeds along this path forged by the two masters, creating works which question the precise aesthetic definition of form and masse while emphasizing their transformational capacity. Veritable "masses" in motion, bags and slices with imprecise boundaries, her "Amphibians" reflect not only the possibility of movement as it acts upon the formal appearance of things, but also the possibility that things may be altered by a covering or superimposed layer of netting or fabric which veils all things, rendering them uniform and indeterminate.

Amphibians are animals or plants that can live both on earth and in water. Like them, the artist's sculptures move through many states, forms and places, adjusting, through their malleability, to various types of space. To live inside and outside, here and there, indiscriminately, is a prerogative of these works, simultaneously containers and contents, interior and exterior, their appearance never unchanging, perennially becoming. These are works which seek to bestow upon the body a movable sense of

the unconscious, transforming matter into something which seeps through the flux of time and memory; the body as magma unraveling according to existential conditions.

It was with these sculpture-bags, these packages, that the artist began to collect photographs of paupers wrapped in plastic and blanket~, sleeping in the streets. In them, the human body itself appeared as an imprecise, mobile shape not unlike the strange, unknown content of Man Ray's "enigma". A form without boundaries, profile or face. A dramatic volume, yet one whose drama is devoid of fate or climax. Nameless shapes needing lines and designations.

These photographic works are "sculptures" which could only occur photographically, or "photographs" imbued with sculptural potential. And they announce another set of works, Daisy Xavier's latest production, in which the medium was once again (necessarily) photographic. Maintaining the logic of the work and the basic idea of packaging, the blue, aquatic series of photographs - likewise entitled "Amphibians" - is a mature continuation of the previous segments. Only now the packages are no longer objects or paupers, beings or randomly collected garbage. They are professional models hired to perform sub-aquatic movements, that is to say, whatever movements are possible to a body underwater, attempting, while bound, to perform evolutions in an environment of fluid. Once again, this body's lack of definition, its equivalence to the formless magma of the other pieces, is at play. Except that the water accentuates not only the body's imprecision but also the indeterminateness of the space which it penetrates and in which it floats. The white mass of this body, with no clear form, no palpable presence, no comprehensible volume, appears to dematerialize, to lose density, to dissolve in the medium which harbors it. More than ever, the dissolution of form and material imposes itself and they become absolutely volatile. At times the dematerialization is so intense that the body becomes pure light, shot thought and rendered imprecise by the flashes and tears in the natural lighting. Matter becomes liquid, the body fades away and sculpture loses mass as it becomes "photography".

Blue and white are the only colors, and this rarefied chromaticism intensifies the very absence of outlines, no longer identifiable through line or color. Everything (body and context) is uniformly material. All is water, fluency, volubility. Unlike the beggar bags and other body packagings, the water bags are dreamlike, tenuous, feminine, delicate pieces. They dilute the drama of the image, dissolve the weight of masses and liquefy material being, rendering it ghostly, "body"-less, purely unconscious, water. Truly "amphibian".

Blue, already present in the color of the netting which wrapped or covered up the early sculptures, perhaps already pointed to the idea of water or the sea as a diluter of profiles, a solvent of materials and of the vision one has of them. And it is this absence of boundaries, of everything which leads to a definition of forms and "truths" which bestows meaning upon the work of Daisy Xavier. She dissimulates the materiality of sculpture which does not allow itself to see or be seen in its fullness; in its final form; it is a sculpture which distorts in space and distends in time. Multifaceted and transformable, both internal and external, body and soul, solid and liquid, Daisy Xavier's work is, in her own words, "my only memory of what has never happened".

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