

The drawing and its shadow  
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In Greece, the origin of painting was considered to have come from tracing over the shadow of a lamplit face that was projected onto a wall. The legend that Pliny The Elder speaks of in his work *Naturalis Historia* 1 (XXXV,15) tells how the daughter of the potter Butades of Sicyon, who lived in Corinto, traced the shadow of her beloved's face which was lit by the soft glow of a lamp while he slept, shortly before leaving for the war at daybreak. Although the Egyptians lay claim to its invention six thousand years earlier, this particular story, which inserts an element of urban myth into everyday life, best explains the relationship between painting and memory, art and love. Perhaps this is why it is a scene that has been recreated throughout the history of painting by many artists, including among others Martín and Scilia and one of their photographs. Their image appears much more incisive than the haughty and snobbish paintings of the XVIII and XIX centuries when this legend was not only a great success, but also served as a tale which to some extent explains the interest in image reproduction, the camera obscura, black silhouettes, and the drawing of caricatures, all of which announced the need for photography's perspective. The edge Martín and Scilia have is that the classic scene is presented as a diversion in post-pictorial and post-photographic times.

This is the context into which Adrián Martínez Marí's drawings containing shadows fit. His piece, which is centred around drawing, contains a shadow which traces the drawing, not to construct it, but rather to split it into two; and in that strange and eerie vibration and with minimal vocabulary he is able to create the impression that the piece is in movement.

Almost nothing is as it seems. Neither is language, which even though based on coded signals and conventions shared by a sufficiently large community of users, somehow always manages to establish a precision in correlation. Catching the meaning of things and events that take place at a specific moment in time requires one to establish not only generalisations, but also involves tracing labyrinthine trails through stories and images which apparently have nothing to do with the initial purpose, but which light the way.

We have become accustomed to literature and art showing us that it is necessary to cross any forest as if we were navigating a maze, given that the safest and smoothest route does not necessarily follow a straight line.

In 1984, Italo Calvino was invited to participate as a speaker in the Charles Eliot Norton Poetry Lectures by the University of Harvard. This annual event, which was started back in 1926 in honour of the prestigious professor of art at Harvard and which gives it its name, deals with poetry in its widest sense, entrusting it to the more important voices at the time. Those who have passed through the "chair" include poets and writers such as T.S.Elliot, Octavio Paz, Jorge Guillén, Jorge Luis Borges and Robert Frost; musicians such as Stravinsky, Hindemith, Cage, and Luciano Berio; and artists such as Ben Shahn and Frank Stella.

From this moment on, he became obsessed with rethinking poetic forms (but also narratives). Before the start of the next course, 1985-86, Calvino had already written five lectures out of the six compulsory ones, but according to his wife Esther, he had thought of producing up to eight. The eighth was entitled *On Beginning and Ending* (of novels) and the sixth which he had planned to write in the United States was entitled *Consistency*.

However, before setting off on this journey to the United States, he passed away during a family vacation in September 1985. Although the lectures were never spoken in public, they were published a few years later in 1988 under the English title that he had chosen - *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*- and it is one of the most unsettling and suggestive books of the late twentieth century.

Although the title seems to suggest a certain dosage of prediction, Calvino dissuades the reader from any premonitory interpretation in the text's brief introduction. The message the text sends, little more than 25 years after being written, is for the sketching out of a new and different perceptive sensibility, that has been developing in the meantime, without us realising it.

Despite the fact that the title of the book mentions that there are six lectures, which underlines the original project, it only includes the five lectures that he completed: lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, multiplicity. If to these “values” we add that of consistency, the sixth lecture that he left unwritten, without knowing the precise interpretation and application of the term, we are positioned in an incisive perspective, centered in the need to understand the world (and also literary traditions and poetry in its widest sense) from our relationships.

The values that Italo Calvino dissects allow us to explain how we perceive as we stand on the unfamiliar bridge between two worlds, which places us in our present.

Each moment in the present is a fleeting moment between two worlds or two moments in time - our past, and what we do not know about the future; although we imagine it as an open multiplicity.

The five values that Calvino proposes, together with their antonyms and paradoxical complementaries, serve as a guidebook for exploring the challenges that we face in the work of Adrián Martínez Marí.

It is precisely from Calvino's unwritten lecture dedicated to consistency where we find some of the first clues to understanding the paradoxes that the drawings by Adrián Martínez present. Basically, this is because there is no text and because everything remains open - a network of relationships and contradictions, whose foundation, despite everything, remains in the five previous lectures that sketch a way to perceive, and read-write, much like the tracing of shadows and the shadows of other drawings.

The term consistency when applied to the material world makes reference to the properties of objects in relation to the rigidity of bodies. Apparently material consistency seems to oppose the value fragility.

The term fragile often appears on packaging and boxes next to the picture of a glass which is chipped where the glass is thinnest, the area our lips would touch when taking a sip from it. Fragility seems to refer to weakness, to that which is brittle and delicate. In the other extreme however, fragility seems to oppose itself to ductile, in the sense that it is the greater or lesser resistance to changes which determines the possibility of breakage.

The drawing/s of Adrián Martínez Marí are not exactly drawings, they are woven together using threads that are hooked onto nails and pins which are fixed to the wall.

They display themselves like a weaving of straight lines. There are no curves, everything is fixed to a structure that would be used for embroidery. But if the embroidery is the end result like a painting, containing color and well-defined forms, then the drawing on paper represents what backstitch means in sewing and on fabric. The distance that separates the thread from the wall allows shadows to fall, like a duplication, like a repetition that is briefly displaced in the space between the contours and the silhouettes. That is where the key to the movement lays (fake like vibration) which transforms the drawing into an installation.

We stress the paradoxes to establish the point of view better. On the one hand the drawing is consistent, because it explains and develops a scene, and on the other it is fragile because it is delicate, it is constructed from a brittle material such as thread and for that very reason it is not permanent; and in addition it is ductile now that the changing position of the light-source determines its ability to adapt to the changes, capable of vibrating in different positions and directions, also assuming all the distortions.

The drawing is not only an outline, it is the outline and its shadow: it is duplication which is associated with simulating or recreating volume using the action of the light for shadow and projection.

Photography, in its beginnings, and before it was called photography, was defined as a technique that allowed drawing with light. William Henry Fox Talbot defined it as “photogenic drawings” in the title of his exposition on his discoveries - *Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing* - that was presented to the Royal Society in 1839. Talbot was interested in the precise and exact reproduction of forms, and experimented using contact techniques with lace and feathers, perhaps because they allowed the quality of the drawing of the forms to be better appreciated than any other object. The thread from the lace would establish a pattern of straight geometric forms and at the same time would introduce curved forms that “drew” flower petals and leaves. Michael Faraday, who drew the attention of the Royal Institution to the works of Talbot a few days before Talbot's own exhibition, affirmed in a tone that we would say today is poetic, that in Talbot's experiments “all lights are dark and all shadows light”. In reality, Talbot did not perfect his technique until the discovery

and patenting in 1841 of the calotype process which is nothing more than a negative, a intermediary step that allows the copy of the copy, as such, improving on the limitations of the daguerrotype process which only produced a single print.

Between 1844 and 1846 Talbot published work in six issues of *Pencil of Nature*, albums of unbound calotypes pasted together by hand which included still-lives and isolated everyday objects. In 1845, under the title *Sun Pictures of Scotland*, he published an album of landscapes. It was no coincidence that he would first use the word 'Pencil', and later the word 'Sun' in order to explain the process behind something that in initially had little to do with the process of drawing by hand, it was as if in his subconscious he believed the idea that these photographic processes were drawings made using light, and thus the viewer's gaze together with the camera and the chemical processes constituted a "new pencil".

In 2002, the artist Vik Muniz produced a series of photographs that fused drawing with photography. He reproduced Piranesi's *The Prisons* etchings by reconstructing the etching on a model previously put together from threads and pins. If the work by Vik Muniz presents us with a game of visual uncertainty in which the perceptive framework is reconstruced through the conceptual illusion between photography and representation, then the work of Adrián Martínez Marí responds to parameters in which the machinery, the craftwork, and the construction process itself form part of how the end result is envisioned. The drawing is conceived through the process of manual frames, like a screen or a tapestry, where the most important thing is the vibration, and the tension of the line and the stroke.

The shadow, which relies on a source of light, integrates a unique luminosity into the idea of drawing. The line is uncluttered, there is no shading not even to offer an idea of volume. The drawing unfurls exactly like a backstitch that outlines the route between stitches. In this sense it behaves much like one of those visual games in the line traces numbered dots in the correct order and a picture appears, some are shapes, some are scenes, from plotting numbers placed in an empty white space (like the wall).

The order of the lines of thread is where the drawings transfer an experience of memory. But it is a memory that has been topicalised and tropicalised like an image that has been learnt and transmitted through scenes that transfer to a dreamed of space such as paradise: a pseudo-tropical scenography, of a coastline with huts and palm trees. This arcadia of the memory is not an image of an original utopia, strictly speaking it is more the drawing of paradise that transmits mechanism of global tourism as a real experience, something that is possible and within reach thanks to a promotional bank loan for private consumption, just as they say in modern up-to-date advertising.

Through the perspective of tourism, arcadia becomes an island by exclusion of the continental such as the metropolis.

Despite the tentacular multiplicity of tourism, there is a rampant promise of authenticity which passes for a restructuring of the hotel into cabin-bungalow-village-town and for a persistent ecology in the landscape, which prefigures an elitist vision dedicated to as much to the more sophisticated economic classes who are looking for exclusivity in the pseudo-primitive and also in the more cultured but also lacking economic power, and who seek a certain authenticity which sets it apart from the massification of the global theme park.

Adrián Martínez Marí 's wall mounted thread drawings, like a petit point, tend to outline the model dreamed up by the touristic arcadia. They are a stencil for any dream.

It is no coincidence that the artist, born in Ibiza/Eivissa which is the mecca of mediterranean hippy-disco tourism, and also resident in Tenerife, the mecca of european winter tourism, adopts a certain "u/t(r)opicalist" distance from which to tackle tourism as a central problem within contemporary memory and perception. In fact, what is underlined in these pieces is the psychological aspect in which tourism becomes not only an economic or ecological problem, but instead, it is fundamentally centered around desire and expectations for the future: exactly like the malfunction of utopia in a psychological theory.

If we explore more critiques in contemporary literature we find numerous examples of how tourism carries out a regulatory role in the global sex industry. *Platform* by Michel Houellebecq is one of the clearest examples of this, perhaps because it connects with the last of the utopian novels by Aldous Huxley, which was in fact entitled *Island*. Where both merge is in the collapse of the dream of paradise. Fruit of two perspectives

and two very different contexts, the final eruption of islamic terrorism in the novel by Houellebecq and of anti-colonial nationalism in that of Huxley, remain connected by the insular geography of Indonesia. For other literary perspectives that are more obliging with escapist literature or even documentaries, tourism offers the perfect backdrop which can be used to sketch out any topic in the limbo of desires; to take an example, the series of mystery novels by Donna Leon are set in the most real theme park on the planet, the city of Venice. Curiously, the island metaphor, seen in the work *Platform*, enables Houellebecq to narrate a story of tourism in which it is understood to be a paradise for sexual desires, while in *La posibilidad d'une île* the idea of immortality is narrated through the tales of cloning and a sect, which serves to establish the geography of a post-apocalyptic paradise.

Emigration, which roughly organises economic diversification in the middle classes in the third world, is in part firmly influenced by the images brought to us by the movements of tourism. Satellite television transmits symbolic images of a universe of desires that do not correspond with reality. Nothing more and nothing less than the demands of tourism, in particular those that lean towards the elitist exclusivity of a utopian arcadia, and even more so if it is insular.

There are few structural differences between the promise of authenticity of the beachhuts on the shoreline as a metaphor for life at one with nature, and the security of a life of consumerism in the major cities of the North where it appears everything seems to be readily available.

Both claims are connected to the assurance of a promised land. But no sooner than stepping foot there, the promise of abundance turns into a nightmare, just like in the "Land of Toys" which appears in the novel *Pi-nocchio* by Carlo Collodi. It ends up being a trap for children who follow their own desires and impulses (as happens to Ulysses' sailors when they land on Circus Island). The children are turned into animals that are locked in cages and become enslaved by men thirsty for power. This is a metaphor which allows us to fully understand the key to tourism involving drunken hooligans, sex, and beaches, or the attraction of emigration which is cannon fodder for mafias and employed in the black market through the selling of illegally pirated products, through prostitution of all types or through temporary work offers in agriculture. In all cases, the enslavement and oppression that exists between leisure activities and work is terrorizing, even though there is a tendency to view them as intrinsic elements of the market. Both extremes generate dividends and business, both complement each other, they even interact.

What is definitely contained in the work of Adrián Martínez Marí is the reassessment of fragility as a way of understanding the contemporariness in the values of Italo Calvino: the fragility embodied in his drawings offers a reinterpretation of consistency, through an idea of lightness in connection with quickness, and multiplicity.

In effect, the drawing is transferred towards a different collection of ideas, as is the case in the artworks entitled *Manual de instrucciones*. By following the syntax found in an instruction manual, Adrián Martínez Marí reconstructs everyday actions and banal scenes of everyday life establishing a sequence that parallels the spirit of Just do it yourself!

*Do it\** emerged from a conversation that Hans-Ulrich Obrist had with Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier in the Select Café in Paris in 1993. Both artists were interested in an artistic practice which involved using instruction manuals to teach people how to reproduce and enliven works of art. *Do it* first appeared in book form and then as an exhibition "in progress" that was fuelled by new and old tutorialised projects. It acted like an artistic creativity manual for all its audiences.

The manual becomes a new narrative form, like a poem for everyday life, installed in the fragile perspective of consistency like a poetic vision.

What are our lives like, and how can they be dignified? This is the question the manual addresses. The answer is merely a proposal explored through the illustrated dissection of actions. It is a programme dedicated to elevating everyday actions to the magical realm of the exceptional, designed like an animation story board that tells "messy" stories in a instantaneous quickness - what happens when someone answers a mobile phone, or opens an umbrella, or pays in cash using a note.

The exactness of how to behave when we conduct ourselves is a tautology that transforms itself into a story. It is in this very precise manner (exactly – exactness) that writers since Hemingway and Dos Passos have used language. The manual clearly explains why we understand the particular narratives of Raymond Carver better in the pages of a book, and those of Robert Altman on film: the speed is only understood when lightness, exactness, and quickness (let's say velocity or more precisely acceleration) allow us to explain the nature of actions and of things in the slowness of movement.