

A Monster Who Tells the Truth

Exhibition series curated by Pilar Cruz

Lara Fluxà

Verni

From 16 November 2018
to 6 January 2019

The *Verni* installation by Lara Fluxà (Palma de Mallorca, 1985) presents a landscape comprising two types of materials with opposing qualities.*

On the one hand, the transparency and fragility of glass: solid, clear, clean and ancestral. On the other, used motor oil: a viscous, cloudy, toxic waste product. While glass is associated with artisanal manual labour, craftsmanship and knowledge passed down from generation to generation, oil is associated with the consumer society and industrial technologies in which operators have lost control over the entire process.

These two materials in *Verni* establish a relationship in which the fluid strains and tenses the solid, clearness receives and contains darkness and both force their rules on one another. The oil clouds the transparency of the glass with its viscosity, while, for its part, the glass acts doubly as a container for the oil: welcoming and shaping it, but also preventing it from expanding and isolating it from the outside.

There are also other materials in the room that act as a counterpoint to those already mentioned, such as metal or rubber, both crucial in the history of the capitalist economy, or certain absorbent elements such as sawdust. In addition, by foreseeing the potential accidental spillage of the oil, the artist has provided some

emergency kits with items that can contain and clean toxic elements. (The kits have been deposited in the offices of the Foundation accompanied by a detailed action protocol, thus the installation extends outside the gallery – and public view.)

Capillary tubes, bubbles, smokiness and protuberances, glass acquires organic forms that run counter to the metallic. These elements contrast with the dirt and toxicity of oil and the combination produces a sensation of hasty abandonment, as if we were facing a post-apocalyptic scenario.

All human traces have disappeared from this landscape, although in reality everything is at a human scale – someone has insufflated breath into the glass and shaped it with his or her hands; the rubber has also been manipulated to adapt it to certain bodies and requirements of movement, transport, work – and yet the human being is not intuited, as if he or she had become a waste product.

Looking at the installation leads to a certain sense of fragility and minimum balance, even to a slight threat that forces us to strain and bend the body. This is the power of matter over human: the tension it generates in us when confronted by it, when it forces its rules on us. The danger and fragility of matter invoke in us a fear

learned from the accident, a fear we respond to with safety protocols that direct the body to prevent and avoid risks.

But the accident is almost inherent in the existence of these materials, not only because of the effect of human action on them, but also because of their very nature. Paul Virilio claimed that progress creates the accident. Every invention and technology carries with it a new category of catastrophe. So accordingly every interaction of matter would also entail the possibility of mishap.

Catastrophic imaginaries created by speculating with accident and risk work to the benefit of economic powers. Thus, science serves the economy of oil and its derivatives – so essential in consumer society – together with research into preventing and managing accidents and the waste that these generate. The industry of protection and insurance companies translate the catastrophe into economic terms.

Verni also explores the limits imposed by the material on the artistic institution in terms of safety protocols and the costs of insuring a work. What are the limits between what can and cannot be insured? Is the value of a work of art at the same time the value of its risk? What happens in a museum when it exhibits something extremely fragile or potentially dangerous, whether thin sheets of glass, motor oil,

mercury or a large tonnage piece?

Finally, the installation highlights the irreversible environmental situation of the planet. Pieces of glass contain and isolate us from toxicity, but glass is fragile, as much so as the biological balance. The remains of absorbent materials and containment systems also offer a sense of security and this in turn leads us to believe that we are safe from risk and pollution, as if the elements of containment could prevent a disaster of major consequences. In this way, free reign is given to continue exploiting resources, feeding progress and proceeding to consume all manner of materials in the belief that there will be a creative solution for recycling the toxic and that disasters will be controlled. But this sense of security is an illusion. The glass will break at some point, nature will reach its limits of absorption and there will no longer be a containment system to control the final catastrophe.

Pilar Cruz

* *Verni* is a Mallorcan word that means the solidified oil waste that reaches the coast as a result of the cleaning of oil tankers at sea.

The artist wishes to thank Hangar, Bcn Glass Studio, Fase and Tmtmtm.

Please be careful, the works are very fragile. Do not approach them.

#MonstreEspai13

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