

From an immaterial tactic

Translation by Sebastián Jatz

**It's always been believed that there is such a thing as fate,
but also such a thing as free will.
What qualifies a man
is the balance of this contradiction.**
G.K. Chesterton

The creative processes of some visual artists in Chile, observed within their own exhibitions, have been marked by works that just happen to configure a group of objects and images that appear limited to an idea that usually lies encapsulated in a conventional museology. In most cases, this conventionality only undermines their proposals. Thus, when dealing with these scenarios it is impossible for me to imagine that a project with the aforementioned characteristics could be visible in other spaces, in another curatorship or simply that the same pieces could be presented within other architectures. However, given local exhibitions in recent months, the current proposals by Mario Navarro, which lie in the irrational, esoteric and spiritualist, go beyond the design of an exhibition space. Navarro uniquely evokes in his ideas the functionality that an exhibition must have as a whole, a diagram that leaves nothing to chance.

Faced with an enormous aesthetic and conceptual potential, he takes up the impulses constructed by a country's vision, where the notion of modernity and secularization have been strictly related to the practice of spiritualism, in order to hide and relegate different stories on the strenuous work of forming a nation.

Concealment, what is refused and skepticism, in its most vindictive sense, intercept the aspect of these proposals as a key clue for visiting and understanding the resistance and political sense present in the artist's current interest in the occult sciences. Then, as in the strictest esotericism, Navarro's works should be analyzed as illusions, as they intend to be understood by a

cognitive function looked for by language, memory and sensory perception. But these works can be considered as significant beliefs that alter the manufacturing we have studied on the mythical and the evanescent. For several good years the emphasis of our culture has been imbued in those mythical beliefs that spread uncertainties, which look out at an unknown future. Nothing could be more successful in placing ourselves before the surprises waiting for us in all these alloys that the construction of art itself has experienced and that seems to always go beyond what is logical.

The connections between art and altered states of consciousness, art and spirituality, art and occultism; and indeed art and mediumship, highlight the need for us to have more than one idea with which we can approach a position on these issues. Much of the explicit link between occultism, esotericism and artistic practice nurtures something that has to do with those ideas that come to the surface when the dogmatic ideals of a religion are no longer present, so that different ideas can appear as reactionary factors. In this sense, an approach to everything that surrounds superstition can be understood as a way to create a rebellious trend, opposite to culture and religion; hence we collect certain sympathies aroused by this, for example, what is revealed with a deck of cards. This practice inevitably seeks an explicit and concrete truth, resembling a value to that which is revealed by religious dogma. This analysis unfolds the argument that an exhibition of contemporary art also seeks to be considered as an explicit and concrete truth, but also going hand in hand with a utopian relationship that brings us new spaces for knowledge occasionally exiled by logical thinking.

Of course, the relationships between art and society's thought vehemently seek to reveal that which we have considered unknown and is close to what we intend to decipher of a barely palpable future. That is why what here is defined as esotericism does not become a superficial pastime, but a kind of "tactic", impregnated in certain groups that managed political and social power and who would have tried to generate their own procedures to concentrate, on the one hand, its power and social status, and also to shape history. A systematic practice capable of challenging the models of national identity and secularization

across the country. There are plenty of examples: Chileanization, acknowledgement of indigenous peoples and educational reforms, among others.

Given these premises, Navarro's works in this exhibition, imbued with drawings, videos and models, seem to decipher issues that aim to reach an impossible: to re-read the interpretations of the emerging temperament in the origin of the Chilean state, one that can only be understood through its most eloquent and insightful actions. However, the ideas that cross this supernatural bond reach a point where we are able to redefine the perception and reception of reality. Thus, to inquire into what we perceive as inexplicable alters these proposals, which have drawn from their formal arrangement a singular imbalance between belief and disbelief, between what is hidden and truth; and radically understand that truth cannot be clearly set out by the occult sciences.

Just like art and poetry, the occult sciences present undecipherable aspects, something to which we do not always have access to, at least through reasoning. That is why, in many cases, there is a lack of confidence on the effects that the current studies of esotericism can produce. Thus, it is between the heterogeneity of the exhibited materials and the irrational ideas that appear under Navarro's perspective that peculiar states of consciousness arise, as well as existential experiences that add some revisions to the contemporary historiography on the relationship between the esoteric and the State. It may also be very likely that the stories that emerge from this artist will be quoted as a kind of proliferation into new approaches and considerations on the crisis of current thinking and the discourse of modern civilization versus its progress doctrine.

Moreover, these ideas, originated in an exhibition, apply a multilateral discourse that appeals to an immaterial notion that undoubtedly fits what we now understand as the configuration of this territory. Territories over which innumerable human experiences go through and where information is preserved of those who built the national ideals that today structure a unique and unrepeatable sense of what is Chilean. This is how certain differences in the references are outlined, which we have been used to display on the history that

has been soaked in the esoteric, creating a network that is in constant communication with parapsychology. However, the specific relationships that history gives to power are evident, a situation that only defines the role of power by establishing its action, both material and ethereal.

Navarro is skeptical regarding spiritualism, but also in his work he has been skeptical of the relationships maintained by the country's political structure, which at certain times have led him to re-consider various interpretations that are tied to a national identity that at this point is more than fractured, as well as the arbitrariness installed by Pinochet's dictatorship. Apparently, it is possible to assume the artist's distrust he has created to delve deeper in the esoteric practice, which could surely be the basis of a political discourse. We could assimilate this discourse and the exhibition's proposal as a plea that repeats a history of Chile fraught with challenges to the symbolic value of human acts, a close reference to what the field of art has been circulating in recent years.

Sometimes artists appeal to the relationship given by the image's value, the political order and the notion of time. The relational link between these is aimed at making clear what are the power relations at stake. Then, by the observation of this case it is possible to see that certain political areas could foresee the paranormal work, its vision and schemes. So, when I reflect on all the components that make up this project, I mix them arbitrarily and I point out that they all have, before the label of contemporary art, been built to meet the rational, irrational and manipulable processes that can be seen nowadays.

As mentioned before, the idea that has been collected or the inspiration gained through the contact with supernatural and extracorporeal entities is but a particular aspect of the relationship with the artistic practice. What the artist does is to reflect in the way in which this relationship presents the problem and the fact that we are dealing with subjective experiences, something very different to receiving information through social, literary and historical sources that almost always affect the development of a work through personal aesthetic speculation.

Normally the place that has been irradiating an altered state of consciousness causes a spiritual dimension that seems to break with irresistible

and immediate force in the artist's proposal. In order to clarify this point, reference can also be taken of the paradigmatic history that at times becomes eccentric before the emblems that visual culture has spread through the masses and social networks.

Ultimately, these forms of making the reflection on the artistic practice visible and in the case of Mario Navarro, of installing the principles of a modern thought capable of causing social, political and religious order – which finally dissolves in intangible and incorporeal contradictions – surround us with fleeting images and simulations of a reality that is in constant contact with the supernatural.