

GALERÍA
AGUSTINA
FERREYRA

*But the sea
 which no one tends
 is also a garden
when the sun strikes it
 and the waves
 are wakened.*

*I have seen it
 and so have you.*

*We knew that
 along with the rest of it
for we were born by the sea,
 knew its rose hedges
 to the very water's brink.*

*There the pink mallow grows
 and in their season
 strawberries*

*and there, later,
 we went to gather
 the wild plum.*

William Carlos Williams

We carry with us the landscapes in which we have lived; they inhabit us. Maru Aponte (Puerto Rico, 1996) begins her process by painting in the company of others, outdoors, in places and with people she frequently returns to. Each time, getting to know the secret places and their unique light rhythm is a gift of inhabiting, which makes all the difference compared to being a tourist, even if you are just visiting. Maru also lives far away and, in a second moment of her work, finds herself at a distance from what she paints. This distance allows her a certain clarity. In her concern to understand what distance does to memory, her pictorial gestures occur. Anyone who has been in a long-distance relationship knows that they are filled with memory alterations and that this fact sets in motion our desire, our capacity to miss without melancholy. The memories of events lived together are always modified. "What is loved is always remembered as smaller or larger." Therefore, these paintings demand a change of scale in perspective. Aponte's current artistic practice involves developing an art of distances, playing with a deeply landscape-oriented intuition. This distance can be filled intensively, like a conversation with the moon at high tide. Inhabiting a landscape teaches us that every distance is a proximity, and every proximity remains a distance. While the sensation of closeness produced by contemporary virtuality is undeniable, there are other ways in which bodies have managed to stay close: "The Tupi-Guarani present this situation: tribes situated thousands of kilometers apart live in the same way, practice the same rites, speak the same language. A Guarani from Paraguay finds himself in perfectly familiar territory among the Tupi of the Marañón, despite being 4,000 kilometers apart." This shows us

that in certain modes of affectivity - Aponte's painting is a clear example of this - we are capable of carrying our tribes and their landscapes always with us, beyond any separation.

"Encountering the world not only means dwelling on the earth but also poetizing in the 'shining' of nature. The landscape, gathered around human beings and inclined toward them, is what appears as the initial gleam. For example, in the late poem 'From Afar,' Hölderlin tells us: 'from those places I knew so well: all the beauties of my land that bloom on the blessed shores... still satisfied with the memory of days that shone brightly.'" Landscape painting proves this: that the gaze is nothing more than a certain play of proximities and distances concerning its initial dazzle. Maru Aponte paints the birth of her gaze onto the canvas. This means that, in relation to the piercing gray as the color of dazzle, of deviation, chromatic relationships emerge to compose these paintings. "If we understand the political crisis that the West is going through as an expression of a loss of the telluric sense and of the landscape. If this is a crisis of existence in the organization of the metropolis, then the landscape is the ecstasy that can offer us the 'simplicity of an image.' Experiencing the landscape, inhabiting it, or attending to an incorporation of landscape thought, restores the gleam to what we find in the world. A gleam that is already poetizing amidst a clear sky."

The technique of watercolor has been historically associated with leisure, not rigor, and understood as a lesser genre in the history of painting, which is why painters who use it have been beautifully disparaged as "Sunday Painters." The minor status of watercolor is determined by its own agency; it desires alongside the painter and demands continuous negotiation, a delirious dance, a process one abandons oneself to—an abandonment that certain bodies are not willing to inhabit. There is an elusive but present insularity in this body of work, in its watery, marine gestures. In Aponte's most recent works—those that inhabit the gallery floor—we can perceive how she transitions from a Protestant phenomenology present in the history of European landscape painting to a neo-Baroque ontology of the Caribbean. If the landscape framing of the European tradition conceives of the landscape based on its mechanical composition, as a superposition of planes and discontinuous strata, in the Baroque experience of radiance, the landscape unfolds in a heterogeneous continuum, in a bodily organicism. The Caribbean intensity of this body of work lies not only in its color scheme and themes but also in its Baroque understanding of the continuous chromatic unfolding of the landscape. Hence, the most recent works treat the landscape as a surface susceptible to being folded, just like our bodies.

.-Octavio Gómez Rivero

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1. Clastres, Pierre. *Society against the State*. Montes Avila Editors. 1978
 2. Muñoz, Gerardo. *Landscape against politics: Considerations on Hölderlin*. Santiago Academy. 2020.
 3. *Ibíd.*