

NOTES ON A STUDY

Ibidem, aquí mismo
(Ibidem, right here)

*“interpretation is the revenge of
the intellect upon art”.* Susan
Sontag, 1964

.first note.

This text surges from a conversation, in other words, from an exchange, and intends to continue it.

To pursue this exchange, with others, is to practice the artist's proposal: refer, quote, resist the stoppage of metonymy.

.second note.

The pieces that compose this study bring forth a play on image.

During the 1950's, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan proposed that the constitution of the ego is carried out by travelling a path that runs “from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic - and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity...”.¹ Paula Anguita's work walks along this path in reverse: it exposes the observer to the fragmentation of what should be united. It's in this way that the bodies shown are not seen as a totality with fissures but through brief temporary lapses, that correspond with small spacial displacements by the observer. The seed of disassembly is present in each of these pieces. The observer is invited, if not obliged, to carry out the fragmentation of the unitary bodies, of the image in its totality, of the identity.

In 1922, Freud wrote: “The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone”.² It is a decapitated head, *out of place*. Three years earlier, he explained that the feeling of the ominous invades us when something familiar, but not known, appears in a dislocated place and time: to see the very hand detached from the rest of the body, to see the inside out.³

.third note.

To select, to section, to bottle, to refer, are steps of an exercise: *Index of Artistry*. An anatomist's exercise? A collector's? A serial killer's? A criminalist's? A detective's? An art historian's? According to Carlo Ginzburg, all of these practices fall under the same paradigm, which he has called “index” or “of indexical inferences”, elaborated towards the end of the XIX century in the convergence of different fields of thought. Ginzburg compares Giovanni Morelli, Sigmund Freud, Sherlock Holmes (or Arthur Conan Doyle) and Alphonse Bertillon's methods emphasizing that they all go through a deciphering exercise, an unveiling of a “deeper reality, otherwise unable to grasp”,⁴ through the clues left by marginal details, seemingly unimportant, by the “scum under observation”.⁵ Given their insignificance, these characteristics escape the conscious control of those who carry out the action: here being the criminal, there being the author of a work of art. Both Bertillon and Holmes aimed on capturing the criminal, the recidivist, through the shape of his earlobe. Freud intended to discover the pivot of the symptom by following mnemonic prints, twists within thought, in short, colophons.

In the field of art history, Morelli develops his method whilst proposing dozens of new attributions in some of the most important museums of Europe. Vilified, branded as a positivist, his direction seemed to focus more on his medical formation, as an anatomist, than on his knowledge of art history. His books are plagued with earlobes, nails, hands. Thus, Wind writes, “any art museum, studied by Morelli, immediately

¹ Lacan, J. (1989). “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1949), in *Écrits. A Selection*. London: Routledge, p. 3.

² Freud, S. (2001). “Medusa's Head” (1940 [1922]), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, London: The Hogarth Press, p. 270.

³ Freud, S. (2001). “The Uncanny” (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, London: The Hogarth Press.

⁴ Ginzburg, C. (2008). “Indicios. Raíces de un paradigma de inferencias indiciarias” (1979), en *Mitos, emblemas, indicios*. Barcelona: Gedisa, p. 192. [Traducción libre/Free translation]

⁵ Freud, S. (2001). “The Moses of Michelangelo” (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 13, London: The Hogarth Press, p. 222.

acquires the aspect of a criminal museum”⁶. Morelli *finds* the *true* author of a piece, based on details that go unperceived to others, “the same way that a criminal is accused through his fingerprints”⁷.

Paula Anguita plays this same game. The artist has selected ninety hands corresponding to some of the most important artists in the history of painting. She has fractured one part of the bodies that have been painted by them, enclosed them in small jars and attributed each of these corporal pieces to a name, an author, an identity. Within the artist’s gesture, she unbottles at the same time the anatomist’s one, taxonomy’s gesture. The exhibition may be mistaken at moments with an anatomy room, with a musky basement where a serial killer would keep *souvenirs* of his or her victims, with one of Morelli or Bertillon’s books.

.fourth note.

Could it be argued that with the referential chart of the hands, the artist shows a “deeper reality, otherwise unable to grasp”? This question is not only found in the *Index of Artistry*, it is the question posed in all of metaphysics, since Plato. Paula Anguita responds to this in her other pieces, a sort of “b” side of the former mentioned. *Rigor Mortis*, claims: “Reality has a fictional structure”. There is no reality, a hidden truth that is to be *discovered*. It is not about *unveiling* that which is incognito behind appearances, but of treating the appearances as the truth that they are, they produce, they construct. This, too, is where the importance of the artefact implemented by the artist is found: the Fresnel. The observer is not called upon to contemplate a sealed image, but to disrupt it with his or her own movement, in other words, introduce their own body in the scene of the piece, in the scene of the crime. Disassemble, assemble, reassemble the image. That which is seen, is not, if not from one of the positions that might be adopted in the room. What is seen is made, therefore, from the point of viewing.

Text written by Silvana Vetö
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⁶ Wind, E., citado en Ginzburg, C. *Ibidem*, p. 187. [Traducción libre]

⁷ Ginzburg, C. *Ibidem*, p. 187. [Traducción libre]