Renata de Bonis

Touch

Room 5

“Touch” is Renata de Bonis first solo exhibition in Spain and the second time exhibiting with L21 Gallery. Exactly a year ago she spent a few weeks at L21’s residency in Palma, producing works for the group show “Eating a vegan sandwich on the train while listening to country music*”*. In retrospect, it could be said that the title was almost premonitory of the dynamic year ahead of her.

“Touch” was conceived and created throughout a non-linear production period, scattered in time and space. De Bonis let go of her habitual studio routines and prevailing sources of inspiration, detaching herself from learnt methods. She kept following some steps, such as the research through images: collecting them, taking snapshots of interesting encounters, inspecting the photos before painting. Yet, the act of painting itself developed in a more organic and slower way, with ideas and concepts emerging in parallel with brush strokes. The artist describes having the feeling that the paintings had their own agency to lead her as painted.

Perhaps this choreography between imagery, ideas and production on the move had to do precisely with that: movement. The paintings were created in a nomadic period for De Bonis, and produced in different homes and studios, with intense activity around her. They became a sort of shelter, a safe space from all the background noise.

Perhaps this soothing effect is connected to the use of a subtler colour palette, depicting scenes that distil intimacy and nostalgia. The experience of migrating, the distance from loved ones, and new contexts are in the mix. Leaving certain things behind and building new spaces for one’s own intrinsically brings a search for a new physicality, the need to insert one’s body into a new environment to make it strong and self-sufficient.

Physical contact is culturally constructed, perceived, and performed differently depending on the geographical context. Our tactile system sends us information about the place we inhabit, about the changes we assimilate through touch or the lack of it. Moving to new territories triggers a sense of physical hyper self-consciousness, making us more aware of the individuality of our bodies.

Physical contact is intrinsic to the definition of ‘Touch’: “handle in order to interfere with, alter, or otherwise affect”, “come into or be in contact with”[[1]](#footnote-1). These also denote an ‘other’ and an action implying movement or change.

The cinematic quality of Renata de Bonis’ paintings highlights that moving towards an other. Works such as “Knot” (2023) or “See Through” (2023) can both be understood as two bodies approaching, in motion, or as a solitary still. The paintings convey a sense of action that can last an instant or can take days, like capturing the time a flower bouquet starts withering (two days, three days, a week…?).

The cinematic eye integrates the perception of the viewer in these movement fluxes. The desire to grasp an instant or the passing of time is almost synonymous with wanting to touch that moment. The repetition in ‘Vestiges’ (2023) echoes that pursuit through a seriality of the same corner with just a slight change of angle.

Capturing time and location (or dislocation) are ongoing themes in Renata de Bonis’ work, from her conceptual installations to the recently revived painting practice. She often goes back to recurring elements and images, such as flowers, tree branches, isolated houses, stones, to decontextualise them to reflect on a certain time and space. They become symbols for touching ground.

The moon, the untouchable satellite present in most of the artist’s projects, also makes an appearance here, taking its time to rotate, as a safe spot from all the hectic, ungraspable movements around.

Aina Pomar

1. Definitions from Oxford Dictionaries. These are the two first “Touch” definition entries shown by google. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)