

Shiver in the Shift

Kajsa Dahlberg, Gaylen Gerber, David Lamelas, Karl Larsson, Lisa Tan

Curator: Eva González-Sancho

an urge, pense-bête
to not forget
and let the imprint
from an aging entity
made out of empty shells
shiver in the shift
between linear reasoning
and informal argumentation

Karl Larsson, *Parrot*, 2010

Shiver in the Shift is a phrase taken from Karl Larsson's book/poem, *Parrot*, published in 2010, the outcome of Larsson's research into the work of Marcel Broodthaers (Belgium 1924-1976). *Parrot* – a mysterious and fascinating bird and also, as Larson says, “a body inhabited by the language of others, a loyal commentator (a marginal actor).” As well as paying homage to Broodthaer's work, *Parrot* also sets out to respond to a lack, to something lacking, something necessary for continuing as a poet, whatever this might be, if indeed it exists.

The (sonorous and onomatopoeic) phrase *Shiver in the Shift* is part of another story, one that echoes the work of this major artist, infused with literary strategies and in which language so often operates as symbol or sign. In the context of the exhibition at Parra & Romero, the phrase is transferred to another context, acknowledging the narrative threads running through this group show. This is a multiple narrative, not only because the five artists present a range of different proposals, but mainly because all seem to be marked by references to a third person. Indeed, each work names, refers or alludes to other authors, although this does not take the form of simple quotation. The viewer is invited to make the distinction between reading and looking (to return to Broodthaers's *pense-bête*), in order to approach the individual works, the different authors, the multiple layers that lie within each work and between the works as a group.

The exhibition brings together five artists of diverse origins and different generations who elicit a series of narrative threads that consider the experience and perception of the work of art, addressing issues of reading, translation, transcription, displacement, and the potential for writing offered by blank space. The emphasis is on the here and now, the moment of encounter between an existing work of art or literature and the viewer/reader's experience of it.

Lisa Tan's (United States, 1972) work centres of historical narrative, sometimes personal, which speaks of nostalgia and the lack of constancy in the conditions of being; indeed, the artist describes her own work in terms of ontology. *Baudelaire Itineraries* (2007), consists of a series of framed paintings and drawings of documents taken from the footnotes of Charles Baudelaire's articles about the 1846 *Salon*. The piece proposes a series of trajectories, itineraries for seeing works of art, following a journey that took place long ago but which is reactivated in the present through the act of re-reading.

A video, *Sunsets* (2012) illustrates an informal translation and transcription from Portuguese and English, of a 1977 interview with the unclassifiable Clarice Lispector (1920-1977), considered one of the most important Brazilian writers of the twentieth century. The piece focuses on some of the aspects present in the creative process such as productivity or passivity. With background images of sunsets, the video proposes a kind of reflection on the origin and birth of a work of art.

A Room of One's Own/A Thousand Libraries (2006) by **Kajsa Dahlberg** (Sweden, 1973) shows a compilation of all the notes jotted down by readers on the pages of copies of Virginia Wolfe's 1929 essay, *A Room of One's Own*, borrowed from Swedish libraries. In this way the piece embodies the trace of an experience, one that is both personal and shared. In this way, Dahlberg describes a space that is public and private at the same time, where viewers are potentially invited to make their own readings of the book by writing their own 'marginal narration', and by doing so, to construct a room of their own.

Gaylen Gerber's work (U.S.A., 1955) questions a central aspect of perception: the process of distinguishing between shape, background, context. To do this the artist incorporates and often foregrounds the work of other artists: a backdrop, some sort of support material, canvas or white or grey paper, which challenge both the perceived identity of the art work and its neutrality within the exhibition space. The piece produced for *Shiver in the Shift* functions as theatre backdrop and scenery for the entire show. Paper is pleated to form strips of de 1,83 x 46 cm suggesting the proportions of the human body. Not all the works are hung against this backdrop but it does nevertheless act as a setting for each and all the pieces in the exhibition.

David Lamelas's (Argentina, 1946) work, loaned from the F.R.A.C. Lorraine collection (Metz, France), "is anchored in his research into space and language. *Projection* (1967) consists of two 16mm film projectors placed back to back. First one emits a powerful beam of light that disturbs the viewer's retinal perception before being drowned in natural light. The second then projects the same imageless film onto a wall that echoes the traditional projection screen, suggesting a visual abstraction, a sculpture in space. In response to this, the viewer's mental presence is solicited (in addition to his physical inclusion): the viewer has to invent images to fill the blank projection surface."¹.

Artist/poet **Karl Larsson** (Sweden, 1977) looks at how a work of art begins to mean something to the viewer, how meaning circulates in a work, what narratives it might contain. In this way, his work deals with perception, thought, reflection and events that are given form through written or sculptural proposals or a mixture of the two. *Detail from The Lake* (2009) is part of an installation based on a true story about Marcel Broodthaers. The text that the piece presents and which the spectator may take away with him/her recounts the following anecdote: In 1944, when Broodthaers was in the Belgian resistance movement, he was obliged to send a packet containing a message to a certain address. But the young poet mistakenly addressed it to *Rue du Lac*, instead of *Rue de la Vallée*. Larsson's piece looks at the loss of one meaning and the creation of another – a form of poetry as well as an allusion to the real existence of the artist by means of the anecdotes outlining his life and his use of language. *The Lake* evokes the concept underpinning Larsson's work – the *paratext* – that which surrounds a text, a discourse, a situation, upon which its existence depends.

The sculpture *Blushing Carpet* (2007) operates as a projection screen, or rather like a gear lever, a *Shifter* which allows us – in the same way as Lamelas's blank screen or Gerber's backdrop – to project ourselves into our own narrative or as an instigating presence for the other narratives proposed by the artists.

Shiver in the Shift is at once an individual and a shared journey. Karl Larsson's *In Orbit 1835 - 1910 & 1910-1986* (2009) invites us to continue this tour. The work consists of two poems, framed and displayed on a double-sided easel, so that they are back-to-back and the viewer is forced to move from one side to the other to see them both. The poems speak of Jean Genet and Mark Twain's connections with Halley's comet, only visible from earth once every 75-76 years, whereby the appearances of the comet coincided with the death of romanticism, the birth and death of Mark Twain, the birth of modernism and the birth and death of Jean Genet.

A journey involves movement from one place to another, but perhaps also the story told by the traveller, memories or a book that recounts the journey. *Shiver in the Shift* interweaves a series of possible, atemporal and anachronic itineraries, like tracings or faint insinuations, made by more than one traveller, although each remains curiously autonomous and individual. Some of the works suggest readings of other works in the show; in turn, the viewer superposes his own reading and by so doing, makes a new departure. Made up of mainly conceptual work, the exhibition brings together a series of open proposals which leave room for the spectator's own experience in the here and now.

Eva González-Sancho, Madrid, 2012

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. *Frédéric Mauftras, catalogue text, F.R.A.C. Lorraine: <http://collection.fraclorraine.org/collection/showtext/361?lang=en>*