

*Life is cultivated in life itself, in breathing. [...] I can breathe in my own way, but the air will never be simply mine. Breathing combines in an inseparable way of being and being with.*

— Luce Irigaray, "From The Forgetting of Air To Be Two", 2001

Two steps away, an organism breathes on your back, a familiar breath warms the back of your neck. Now, in your ear, you hear the whisper of moving air: we are not alone. Goosebumps on the skin in the form of sharp intuition asks you to turn your head, to follow the whisper, which is also a reflex, which is also a waltz. The room is a lung and the bronchi dance to the sound of one, two, three, one, two, three: breathe in, breathe out, aspire, breathe in, breathe out, aspire.

## Breathe in

Feel how the air enters into your body and fills each of your alveoli. In this first step of the waltz, the couples prepare to dance. The brighter bodies contain and sustain, while the darker ones seem to let themselves go as they extend beyond the first ones. Nothing is ever so clear. Watching lovers embrace, being present here and now, ask yourself how many are accompanying you. As long as we don't stop breathing, one is never alone.

In this body of work, Anna Irina Russell - immersed in a long-going investigation of breathing - allows herself to be fascinated by and takes the respiratory apparatus of scorpions and spiders as her point of reference. Their lungs, called lungs in book form, are formed by folds instead of pouches: they do not kidnap the air, they simply provide it with a labyrinth through which to circulate. If we read them carefully, on their white pages we discover traces of others, signatures of bodies that at some point have been close to them, metallic stains caused by the loving and violent rubbing of other organisms. It's too late, the graphite has caught you: a contagion.

## Breathe out

Release the air that fills your body - which is no longer yours, but ours - notice how you deflate as the space around you fills with you. If these beings dance to the beat, it is thanks to those who have come before you, those who have breathed enough beside them to give them body. Together, they form an archive of the air, an almanac of the breaths of all those who have passed and all those we have been. The one we call another is nothing but a past or future version of ourselves.

Inviting us to reflect on the act of radical intimacy that is sharing an atmosphere, the artist makes visible through graphite - a septic and slippery material - the processes of contact and contagion between bodies, as well as the beauty and the difficulty of welcoming the

stranger within. How do we approach that which stains? How do we relate to that which moves unpredictably? How do we receive the mark of difference, reconcile ourselves with the unknown, tenderly welcome contagion? What does the scorpion that a few years ago stuck its stinger in Anna Irina's foot have to do with this desire for interspecies empathy?

## **Aspire**

Now that you are part of this whole: you are well received. By recognizing this communal immersion in the air, by taking into account our porousness and thus our vulnerability and susceptibility to contagion, we recognise that the world we inhabit is one of flows and currents. A soft world, without fixed or closed form, but in constant openness to mutual and reciprocal affectation. Graphite, which the artist obtains in solid, hard bars and which she insistently and stubbornly turns into powder, is the material here, which embodies the complex tension between skin and guts, between surface and depth, between visibility and invisibility; just as it is the one who mediates between mineralization and defeat, between fossilization and softening, between limits and tenderness. Nothing is ever so clear. It is not a matter of representation, but rather a sensorial and embodied recognition of a set of intricate and inexorably entangled relationships.

In the face of a world that is leading us to asphyxiation, turning aspiration into the third beat of the waltz - the one that gives us the footing to return to the first with renewed energy - it's a form of resistance that invites a resumption of meditation from the desire for change rather than from the desire for normalization. In the world that Anna Irina Russell's contagion invokes, the community - dirty and shiny - is summoned to confront the politics of immunity - suspiciously clean and sterile - while appealing to our respons(h)ability and aspiring to mobilize our capacity to respond, to care for the ecosystem that breathes us.

**Once again, together: one, two, three, one, two, three, breathe in, breathe out, aspire, breathe in, breathe out, aspire.**

blanca arias

In collaboration with Hangar, Center of Production and Artistic Investigation and LaEscocesa.

**bombon**

Trafalgar 53 B

08010 Barcelona, ES

[info@bombonprojects.com](mailto:info@bombonprojects.com)

[bombonprojects.com](http://bombonprojects.com)