

**FEMINIST
PERSPECTIVES
IN ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS
AND THEORIES OF ART**

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**COSA Y TÚ. NOTES ON MY DOINGS AND
RECENT WORK**



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I will begin by talking about how I work, how I think about what I do, in a general way. Then, I will show some selected works that I consider adequate for this context. I shall try to compile a series of notes without interpreting them, to provide a few guides, and discuss the starting points and motivations for some of my pieces.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share some material that is not usually public: images of works in progress and elements that are hidden or off-scene, but which are part of the process. I want to share what I experience while I work and draw attention to the surface, the tactile aspects of texture and foreground, acknowledging a haptic dimension through an itinerary that is intimate and close to my work. This is intended to complement the documentation of the finished works, which might otherwise seem slightly sterile.

Generally, I approach sculpture from a broad perspective, producing objects that are located somewhere in the margins of assemblage and collage. My sculptural praxis rubs up against my interest in graphic art and experimental use of image reproduction, applying different techniques for photography without a camera. I often insert graphic material into my work through magazines that act as a reference to popular culture, but that I intentionally interrupt before they can declare anything. In the various lines of work I have developed, I extract objects and images from the systems of production and consumption in which they circulate, in order to play with their associative possibilities. There, the specificity of the printed materials and objects are subjected to new relations: to various forms of appropriation, estrangement, and re-contextualization.

To introduce my work methodology, I want to start by reading some extracts on the concept of *bricoleur* that Lévi Strauss describes in *The Savage Mind*, since I find that it resonates with my own work methods.

In its old sense the verb 'bricoler' applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle...

...the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman... he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project... but with the remains of previous constructions or deconstructions.

The set of the 'bricoleur's' means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project... it is to be defined only by its potential use or, putting this another way and in the language of the 'bricoleur' himself, because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that "they may always come in handy".

[...] his universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand' [...] He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' [...] [The bricoleur] 'speaks' not only with things... but also through the medium of things; giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The 'bricoleur' may not ever complete his purpose, but he always puts something of himself into it.¹

My work emerges with an affective or associative gesture through the materials that I gather, with actions as simple as gathering, folding or stacking. I move things around and change their positions, I activate them in encounters and passing dispositions, attempting to match them, to see them in unknown ways and generate a sense of estrangement. Without a clear objective, I act on previously selected or found objects, creating unusual relations, and I am attentive to when something in my work gives me a form or articulation in which I recognize something of profound interest to me. In this sense, I don't think of my work as a vehicle for expression, but perhaps as a way of developing and digesting what goes through me at different levels — be it personal, political, aesthetic, etc. — and that I end up having to resolve in a technical way.

¹ The Savage Mind. 1962 Claude Lévi-Strauss / University of Chicago Press, pp.16-21 [(FCE) [Fondo de Cultura Económica], Madrid, 1987 / pp.35-42].



The starting point is where I recognize a possible formalization of something that I sense intuitively and desire. Often, a beginning occurs in the moment when I give something up for lost, or lose respect for it; when I tidy or pick up the pieces of failed attempts or accidents; when I am leaving my studio but something catches my eye. Ultimately, it is when unexpected things present themselves and I am able to see them.

It's a give and take dynamic. For me, it is fundamental to observe with attention what each piece is asking of me, to observe its potential, and to enter into a sort of OBJECT-SUBJECT negotiation. However, I also have a sort of internal guide that helps me make decisions, since there are moments in which a piece could go in one of several directions. The decisions don't have to do so much with a discursive dimension or the intent to assign unambiguous meaning, but of acting in accordance with a certain sense of it, in accordance with patterns that mark my relationship with the object. If meaning surfaces, it is *a posteriori*, or is generated during the personal encounter of each spectator. The result is an accumulation of conscious decisions, but also of circumstances, accidents, errors in calculation, deviations from a motor-idea, intuition, or certainty.

I try to take the things I have in my hands to the point where I consider them to have acquired their own presence, their own autonomy. Ideally, the object should speak back to me with a certain entity, it should reach a point where I can see, in a unitary way, the diverse fragments or elements that form a piece. The piece should be able to return my gaze.

I shall now present a few of my recent works, beginning with two sculptures from 2014 and 2015. In both, I used different kinds of magazines from the 1960s and 1970s, which were aimed at a female audience. Both sculptures are clearly driven by a formal yet constructive and iconoclastic intent. Through simple gestures such as piercing, sectioning or stacking, I act upon this paper device, which through its content and publicity spreads and reinforces models of domination and oppression. It shows different mechanisms for constructing identities and functions as a vehicle that both reflects and produces norms and expectations regarding the roles of women.

To introduce *Daytime Regime (Elaine)* (2014), I will use a text by Miren Jaio, which was published in *Estado Mental*, issue number 6 (2015). In transferring the formal structure of the sculpture to the text and the layout of the page, Miren Jaio makes several formal approaches to *Daytime Regime (Elaine)*. In the footnotes, she develops a parallel discourse that becomes a tribute to actress and film director Delphine Seyrig. Miren has re-baptized my sculpture as *Homenaje a Delphine Seyrig [Tribute to Delphine Seyrig]*.

A fifth tentative description:

The sculpture can be classified within the statuary typology. The two statues, the ¾ or 'American shot' of the white figure and the dark bust come from the November 1968 issue of Nova, a British women's magazine described in its day as 'a new magazine for a new woman'. How is Tribute to Delphine Seyrig produced from two magazine photographs? It is done by opening the issue of Nova horizontally and vertically. [...] The American shot of the white figure and the dark bust escape the enclosure of the page to acquire volume and become statues.

The desire of the statue artist is for the statue to appear before the spectator always as something new, just as Nova magazine desired for itself and its women. Or better, a statue should be timeless, at once ancient and fresh. As proof, one only needs to see what occurs when this magazine, directed at 'intellectual women, politically radical and beautifully designed', is unfolded like the wings of a butterfly. From the unfolding emerge hunting Dianas, Venuses from the water, Egyptian sphynxes and busts of Nefertiti; updated versions of classical statues that transcend their existence in the bi-dimensional and volatile economy of images on paper to become forms that have volume and occupy space.

Whoever is reading this can try it with the couche paper magazine that they hold in their hands. Open the magazine, unfold it like butterfly wings, and at that moment, go around it and observe what coincidental encounters and moving sculptural configurations emerge from the unfolding, what vintage portrait is produced.



A sixth tentative description:

The sculpture pertains to the category of 'broken sculpture'. The brokenness is produced by sectioning, the metal sheet that pierces the pages of the Nova magazine, slicing and mutilating faces and bodies. In sculpture, the term 'sectioning' has a double meaning: on one hand, it implies structuring the space into parts; on the other hand, it destroys images. The combination of the two sectioning operations in Tribute to Delphine Seyrig produces a sculpture with two formal driving forces, one constructive and the other iconoclastic. In fact, it is difficult to determine where one begins and the other ends: any act of formal production necessarily implies the destruction of pre-existing forms.²

The column *Daytime Regime (Brigitte)* (2015) originated with my interest in working on a scale related to my body and a simile of the vertical position; standing up, being on my feet and affirming myself. The model of a daytime regime, according to Gilbert Durand in *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, relates to the vertical scheme and the upright position of human beings. A scheme of symbols is organized in exclusionary and antithetical ways, comprising axiomatic images or symbols that possess great polarizing force.

Additionally, of all the magazines that make up the piece, I was specifically interested in the covers with faces that occupied almost the entire page, similar to the close-up images of female film icons. Laura Mulvey³ explains how close-ups in films create an image that condenses feminine beauty as spectacle and erotic symbol, and is intimately connected to the fetishism of consumption. The fragmented female face and body stops the narrative structure and flow of action in moments of contemplation and eroticized visual pleasure.

What is Vogue? What is fashion? (...) It is the figure, the fortune, the shape of things to come

The face, the skin, the skin of luxury (...) It is above all the face, the look, the cosmetics

What is Vogue?

It is the new face under the old face, it's the pose, the look, the skin of narcissism,

the sex hidden under veils, and ropes and strands,

It is the old you, the one you don't want to be anymore, becoming the new you, you that want to be, it is the new face under the old bad face, it is the weak face covered over by the strong face.⁴

Cheek to Cheek (2015)

The group of sculptures entitled *Cheek to Cheek* in the *Cosa y tú [Thing and you]* exhibition (Carreras Múgica Gallery, Bilbao, June 2015), consists of superimposed cement elements that are based on mannequin models. They evoke corporal postures and their projection axes, the suspension and gravitation of a living body.

During the process of creating these sculptures, I forced myself not to directly include graphic material and to focus on more physical aspects. However, the image presented itself in another way. I was especially interested in producing physical resonance between the object and its observer, as well as putting the implicit capacity of the exempt sculpture into play. Going around the piece activated different ways of implicating oneself with the object, starting with a figurative and narrative reading, which I connected with sexualized publicity images and an imaginary related to the history of sculpture: from the *kouroi* to *The Kiss* by Brancusi, and other contemporary references

² Miren Jaio, *Varios acercamientos formales a una escultura de June Crespo* / El Estado Mental no.6, 2015 / pp.100-105.

³ Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and curiosity*, Chapter 3, 'Close-ups and Commodities' / British Film Institute 1996 / Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*.

⁴ Fragments of Martha Rosler reads *Vogue* 1982 / electronic arts mix



such as Sarah Lucas. I was interested in how the act of going around them made them more complex to read, and each viewpoint created a sense of estrangement from the one before it.

The different faces of the sculpture reveal the complexity of what an 'image' unfolds. In some way, I wanted to appropriate the publicity language of brands such as American Apparel and make it my own. I sought to interrupt the way in which we read or perceive familiar forms, to involve us based on their physical and material presence. Beyond an initial, more superficial interpretation, for me from some perspectives the same object was linked to internal images of the body such as folds, joints and different corporal tissues, in intimate relation.

Chance Album No. 1 (2016)

In a series of assemblages that I have gathered under the title *Chance Album*, I was interested in building by putting two planes in contact with each other: the imaginary and symbolic, together with notes of some of my dreams, alongside the material and sensitive. From objects that I had found, covers or illustrations of magazines, books, etc., I chose materials that evoked mental and affective landscapes, that substituted pieces of dream scenes, recalled sensations, or associated memories. Assemblage or collage sculpture functioned for me like the unconscious mind, where thoughts, memories, physical perceptions, textures, and surfaces all exist on the same plane and temporal divisions do not exist. It is a prolonged internal dialogue that takes shape in the combinations and relations of the objects that I propose. I associate the sculptural relations and contrasts of physical and formal qualities with affection, physical sensations, or a type of thought that does not seek to build rationally. It responds to a type of thought that is more poetic than logical.

Chance Album (Queen) has content from magazines that remain outside the scene, though in a certain way they are still present in the different elements. In that issue of *Avant-Garde*, there was a photographic report of young people injecting themselves with heroin. In an image laid out in blood, a young woman in the foreground extends her arm forming a diagonal on the page. She bites a piece of cloth tied around her arm while the needle enters her skin. The image creates tension in the direction of the cloth between the arm and the teeth, the extended arm, and the needle penetrating the skin. Pressure, tension and distension, a fluid entering the bloodstream. Even though confronting this image produces a strong physical sensation, I decided to hide it, and in some way transfer the idea of injecting oneself with drugs to the other elements that make up the piece.

