

Sol Calero

Casa encontrada

Text by Francesco Scalas

While the tiles of mosaic emerge up out from the floor, a structure recalling a house without windows or frames invites guests to step forward. Beyond the threshold, the imposing paintings completely covering the walls of the gallery transform the second half of the first room into a forgotten loggia. Columns join together to form arches, becoming *natural frames*¹ that provide access to the view of the external world.

The landscapes one glimpses through the arches do not just come alive and take shape within the architectural element itself. The geometric shapes—emblems of human activity—commingle and overlap with the organic and changing shapes of the creation through transparencies and veils. The new series of paintings by Sol Calero is a departure from her previous work: whereas in the past, her subjects were more defined and made unmistakable references to her origins, this new production is more disassembling and focuses on the intersection of human action and acts of nature. These views framed by the vaults look out onto worlds in which the nature–culture dichotomy does not seem to exist: human action does not take place in opposition to or in protection of nature, but inside of it.

Are nature and culture really so distinctly opposed to one another? The artist chooses places of forgetting—those hybrid zones significantly changed by human intervention, but then abandoned and reabsorbed by the environment—as a metaphor and starting point to begin sewing back up the clear dividing line of this dichotomy, thereby reassessing the meaning of ruin and reflecting on the meaning of a common home.

Sol Calero then digs into the background of the gallery, almost turning it into an archaeological site. But the title, *Casa encontrada* (Found House), seems to suggest a meeting more than a discovery. And the meeting expresses the sense of egalitarian convergence between two entities in the best way possible, two forces coming together and lingering voluntarily. The intention of discovering, on the contrary, alludes to a way of acting that has less to do with exchange and reciprocity: of the two entities

¹ Luigi Ghirri, *Lessons in Photography*

that come into contact, only one is active, and it exercises an objectifying force vis-à-vis the other in order to understand it.

The artist, who has lived in Europe for many years but spent her childhood and adolescence in South America, is well aware of the fact that the dominant narrative has always described the relationship between the “Old” and “New World” as a discovery of the latter by the former, and that the very act of naming—precisely as in this case (Old and New)—generates an alteration of reality, a particular gaze conditioned by the differences between terms which did not exist before. *Whoever possesses language possesses the reflection of the world expressed and implicit in this language.*²

With *Casa encontrada*, Sol Calero invites us to an appointment with the remains and fragments of stories and places that have ceased to exist. And not with the intention of freezing them in place and exhibiting them in museum displays, but of showing that human civilizations have always been an open laboratory of social experimentation, rather than a linear march towards modernity and the institutions of the present day. By subverting the typically Western prejudices of Otherness, the artist’s work makes use of the counter-hegemonic potential of art in order to turn the gallery into a lively and dynamic space aimed at the communitarian experimentation of social structures, which in this way can be explored and transformed. *It is an aesthetic of turbulence, whose corresponding ethic is not given in advance.*³ It is an infinite process, and thus often incomplete; it is an invitation to refuse the bureaucratization of the mind, a stimulus to go ahead and to turn back, renouncing the idea of a single direction *a priori*; it’s a zig-zag in which the multiplicity and reversibility of anthropological options emerges gradually from the traces of the past, without ever coming to an end. *An aesthetic, therefore, is more than a philosophy or theory of art and of the beautiful; it is a way of inhabiting a space, a special position, a way of seeing and transforming oneself.*⁴ And this found home in the background of the gallery is not just a physical discovery, but above all a metaphysical one: returning to the imagining of environments in which beings interact amongst themselves, like shared habitations to be taken care of.

² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

³ Édouard Glissant, *Poetica della Relazione*

⁴ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory; From Margin to Center*

Casa encontrada by no means offers absolute certainties, but instead provides a series of solid clues: it defines the capacity for imagining alternative and oppositional aesthetic acts as an answer to current cultural practices. Whoever is lucky enough to pass through its spaces will reassess the importance of the primordial attitude towards determining one's environment and recovering the instinct to build one's own home, and therefore one's own life.