

Mónica Alonso. Building dreams

Her work is excessive, even though it is minuscule. Excessively endowed with architecture, traps, paths and labyrinths. The titles of her series evoke persistence and aims ever more sharply defined: *Habitación para Conversar (Room for having conversations)*, *Construindo o descanso (Building Rest)*, *Adosados (Semidetached)*, *Aséptico (Aseptic)*, *Somniurizado*. Alonso began this cycle of research into the nature of domestic space and her own obsessions in 1994, and as it has evolved she has purified her language and discarded all her excess baggage for the creative journey.

Architecture has been built up as a science of utopias ever since Archigram and Archizoom, and since Vito Acconci and his studies of public and private spaces, reminiscent of architecture, sculpture has played at being an utopian habitat, a useless architecture.

When Henry David Thoreau eulogized, from the New England woods in the middle of the last century, the wisdom of the savage man which must have existed before the drawing up of the social contract, he reproached civilization for having created an architecture inaccessible to the greater part of humanity. If the thinker of Walden decided to forego the superfluous, he did so in order to plumb the depths of human beings and their well-being. It is in this song to the essential, the fundamental and the necessary that Mónica Alonso aligns herself with H. D. Thoreau.

Understanding the basics, dissecting domestic space and extracting, as if they were the hot entrails of some animal in the vertigo of its extinction, the elements of the home all go to make up Mónica Alonso's work. Just as a surgeon extirpates diseased organs, she gets rid of the dispensable, and so a door, a window or a bed take on a meaning which is not merely physical but also mental or spiritual, and these elements echo the experiences of existence.

And the apparent naivety of a room, built like a scale model, painted and touched up, turns into an architecture of the obsessions which inquires, provokes thought and repeats with an interminable cadence the need to find a place to put dreams to rest.

In M.C. Escher's prints, we are fascinated to see how staircases, columns and walls intersect each other, and we are always fooled, as we see for a few seconds how the unreal is made real. Like M.C. Escher, who represents an unrealizable architecture, Mónica Alonso overwhelms us with this architecture of the impossible, explaining: "At first sight we are attracted by the colours of my rooms, but how are we going to sleep if there's no roof to protect us, if one door opens on to another and provokes unease". This is the paradox of her sculptures, her objects, through which the attraction/repulsion duality penetrates into our senses. It is as if, flying against all the conventions of the art of Feng Shui, she has decided to find her own equilibrium, following a process of trial and error which inevitably reaches the conclusion of her series *Construindo o descanso (Building Rest)*. From her first failed attempts, the passing of time has revealed solutions to these geomantic problems, and the successive model which serves to discover the act of resting.

There is a labyrinth, a path which directs our gaze in all her pieces. We imagine a journey and we go in through an unadorned window, leave through the roofless roof and then we enter again, and so on until we get fed up, until we can recognise the place without having to see it or touch it. We interpret the limes, the boundary between the material and the intellectual. There is a precise moment, whatever it is, in which we turn into the Minotaur to roam the rooms; and there is another, vaguer moment, in which the artist comes to life as Dedalus in an imperceptible transference.

It is a proven fact that there are certain colours which attract. We have all suffered when we have gone into the country with a T-shirt of the wrong colour, and every single insect in the world wants to try out our pockets. Mónica Alonso uses this resource with premeditated precision, using red, green, blue, she reminds us, “as traps”. Loud, strident, excessive, colours, which call to us and hypnotise us. This effect fascinates the artist and she uses it as a game to amuse herself.

There are doors, windows and beds. This is the ABC of the domestic space. We have no idea what is happening on the other side of the wall behind the bedstead. In *Adosados (Semidetached)* this ignorance turns into anguish, the need to know, unease. Through the fictitious Transparency of the walls we observe the scenes taking place in the space closest and furthest from us: the one just behind our walls. We solved the insoluble, and once again the unreal turns real. The bed is the only unconquered space, it is the capsule which protects us and tucks us in, but it is also appears to us as the space vulnerability. It is maybe for this reason that we have to get up, to save ourselves from disaster, violation and the everpresent abyss. Sometimes there are windows but no doors, or there are doors but no windows, then the distinction between them becomes blurred and they mutually take over their function, lose themselves in this mixture, they destroy each other in the chaos. At other times there are no doors or walls, or any other sign of the essential apart from the bed, which thus becomes even more of a symbol. And so the essential becomes extrapolable, interchangeable, and dumbfounds us.

There is asepsia, which is one of those concepts which emerge casually for Mónica Alonso. One image is enough to convert an idea into a new piece. To contemplate the series *Aséptico (Aseptic)* is to enter once again into the tunnel of the impossible. The arrangement of small balls on the floor obstructs the fulfillment of the title, outlaws asepsia and submerges us in this atmosphere of contradiction through which the artist moves.

*Adosados 3 (Semi-detached 3)* is the project which Mónica Alonso is presenting in the Sala Montcada. “This represents the possibility of planning a building after creating so many isolated rooms”, observes the sculptor. The 12 stories of the construction, with their corresponding 27 beds, rise up to occupy almost the whole space. It is now a question of gravity, of physics and Newton, now that the beds graze the ceiling in an inconstant equilibrium, secured by pieces of elastic, liable to fall and smash, although there was always a rhetoric and presence of levitation in her rooms.

Even when she had feet on the ground, they were tiny, weak feet, giraffes' feet which told of the will to isolate oneself and say goodbye.

Sometimes we wonder about the meaning of the works' titles, but then titles themselves give us the answer.

Álvaro Rodríguez Fominaya, 1997