

LINA ESPINOSA

IMPROBABLE LINES

21st november 2019 – 25th january 2020

The line is the protagonist of the exhibition presented by Lina Espinosa at Rafael Pérez Hernando Gallery in Madrid. It is a complex line that manifests itself in each of the works included in the show, with multiple physical and symbolic expressions that constitute not only a material manifestation but also a medium that transmits thoughts and emotions.

Without being a retrospective, the selection covers a relatively extensive period of the artist's career. It includes a collection of three-dimensional drawings made with lines that come out of the paper, which is presented for the first time in this exhibition. The origins of these pieces date back to the series *A través del cuerpo* (Through the Body, 2003-2009) composed of light-based drawings of explicit figurative nature, achieved by drilling small holes on the paper. When placed on a luminous surface, they reveal characters that show emotions caused by conflicting situations. One of them, for example, represents the face of a man crying and another a character grieved by great sadness. The drawings can only be seen when placed on a lit surface. Otherwise, only white papers with small holes can be seen. The invisible becomes concrete when seen backlit.

Some sketches made at that time sow the seed for the development of the drawings that come out of the paper and eventually acquire their own life in three-dimensional works. At that time, however, the artist considered them too intimate and decided not to show them. Instead, she developed several series: *Coordenadas móviles* (Mobile Coordinates, 2009-2012), based on the representation of the concept of "territory;" the project *Impacto mínimo* (Minimum Impact, 2012-2013), in which she explored mining exploitation and irregular waste management that destroy the marine environment; *Mapas vivos* (Live Maps, 2012-2014), audiovisual experiments that explored the concept of vulnerability through cartography; and *Flores Negras* (Black Flowers, 2014), in which she combined art and biology from an ecological perspective.

Once she finished these projects, Espinosa questioned the essence of her work and rethought the idea of bringing the line into space. During the process of reflection and search, she took up the video *Fonografías* (Phonographies, 2012), clearly autobiographical, in which she shows, in the foreground, her hand making strokes on a drawing board. Inspired by the exploration of sounds, she uses the score of an automatic drawing and produces the series that gives the name to the exhibition, *Improbable Lines*.

Some of the drawings arise from something as "unlikely" as the sound of the street's activity heard in the artist's studio in Bogotá, Colombia, despite being located on a sixth floor. According to the artist, "when I moved to the studio in Las Nieves, I was overwhelmed by the noise that came through the windows. The street's world, the salesmen's proclamations, the prayers of the processions, the shouts of the demonstrators, and the horns of the cars, shocked me. That feeling translated into graphics that became the mark of that Bogotá city that slipped into my workshop." The studio—recreated in one of the gallery's rooms to give the visitor an immersive experience—becomes a laboratory in which the artist begins to analyze processes based on two-dimensional drawings from which thin metal wires eventually come off. Later, the threads come to life by detaching themselves from the paper and becoming three-dimensional works that hang from the walls and the ceiling.

The studio becomes a natural space in which the artist weaves delicate amorphous structures with fine metallic threads. Each drawing she makes, with or without paper, extracts for her the structure of an idea, of a synthesis. Little by little, she moves away from the subject and focuses more on the process. Each drawing is in dialogue with other drawings, with other works, and therefore the process is permanently transformed. A fundamental aspect of this process is the search for the precise thread, the appropriate wire, the ideal material that allows her to convey an idea.

A work that marks a milestone in that search is *Familia* (Family, 2010), a "knot" of wire from which a small stone hangs. The piece represents the tensions and contradictions that arise from belonging to a family nucleus. According to the artist, from this delicate and tiny assemblage, which was presented by Rafael Pérez Hernando Gallery during the art fair ArtBo, in Bogotá, in 2018, she developed a series of abstract "autobiographical" works, constructions, or "tangles" of wire, inspired by intimate personal experiences. These include several drawings, with and without paper, created with metallic threads such as *Desórdenes* (Disorders, 2011) and *Otras olas* (Other Waves, 2019), and *Cobija* (Blanket, 2019).

Another piece that stands out in the exhibition is *Historias que no fueron o serán* (Stories That Were Not or Will Be, 2019). The installation of metal sheets in the form of "tears" or drops and circular mirrors hangs from invisible threads and moves slightly to motions such as the steps of a spectator. This work allows us to reflect on the fragility of the present and the uncertainty towards the immediate future. *Ancestor* (2018), a delicate tree made with a fragile bronze wire placed on a tiny found object, as the name implies, is related to the artist's ancestors and is inspired by her "family tree." According to Espinosa, this tree is inspired by the search of our history. It invites us to reflect on who we are and where we come, both as individuals and as members of a community.

A fundamental piece, *Trazos y silencios* (Strokes and Silences, 2018), consists of a metallic thread on paper and serves as inspiration for most three-dimensional works. It should be noted that this drawing received the Kubik Prize's honorable mention at ArtBo, in 2018. Some of the three-dimensional works that explore the spiral, including *Dolor y olvido* (Pain and oblivion, 2006), are based on this curved geometric shape, which emanates from a point and moves away as it revolves around it, and is found in both the animal and the vegetal kingdoms. It is also found in different cultures, particularly in ancient civilizations, for which it symbolizes travel or life. On the other hand, for the artist, the spiral synthesizes a possible movement pattern of history. *Geografía* (Geography, 2019), made with wire on cardboard, is another example. The spiral is also present in series such as *Dibujo habitable* (Habitable Drawing, 2015), which was nominated for the VIII Luis Caballero Award, and *Trópicos* (Tropics, 2017).

According to the artist, the spiral is "a very powerful symbol." On the one hand, it refers to the conception of the cyclical time present in different ancestral civilizations, including pre-Columbian cultures that populated what is now Colombia and, on the other hand, it symbolizes the movement and structure of change." In *Generaciones* (Generations, 2019), a series of semicircles made of wire come out of the paper. What the viewer does not initially see is that it is a continuous line that forms a column, which can be seen by observing the back of the work framed in an acrylic box. According to Espinosa, this piece is inspired by her experience as a mother and, more generally, by the evolution of all human beings.

In the words of the artist, "the line is the protagonist of a search that privileges intuition as a form of accurate, forceful, and essential knowledge, despite the place that rational thinking gives to that infallible form of transformation of consciousness, of evocation and memory, to that form of creation of realities that become more real than what is called real." In this show, the line becomes the symbol that conveys the essence of a form in a kind of conceptual abstraction with existentialist nuances.

Francine Birbragher PhD
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