

## Cynthia Gutiérrez: indexes of (another) life

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The question was whether life existed on another planet, and they found out it did. Then the question became in which planet and they signaled towards those that are lit by the sun without burning, like ours. The question now posed by multidisciplinary teams of scientists all over the world is if life could have only arisen under the same conditions as it was formed on Earth. With other elements, other types of energy. If that life would not be completely different from how we have imagined it, with no heartbeats, wings or photosynthesis, a life that does different things than those we do. Beyond the possibility that we will one day discover if there is life and we are not able to recognize it because it resembles, say, a pipe (who says that some stains in books are not wheat fields in which tiny aliens leave us messages?), the question forces us to rethink the mechanisms of the world we do know and to marvel in front of other certainties we travel through every day.

The creation of new objects that exceed reality in order to bring us closer to the Real is one of the constants in the work of Cynthia Gutiérrez. In her microcosm, things seem to be made by materials we are familiar with but operate in another manner so as to misplace those who relate to them. That which has no precedents forces the spectator to stop being exclusively a spectator when he questions not only the purpose of the pieces, but the qualities he counts with in order to make sense of them.

In *Bing-bang* a lamp that has a roll of foam instead of a light bulb alludes to the origin, but to a different origin than the one we imagined: if there is an original light, it is not made up by the light we know. The names that we have invented are, irremediably, an eternal-work in-progress, an approximation. Regardless, this does not mean that human creations lack gravity. Culture is artifice, but it can be, as in *Night Blooming*, an artifice that gives fruits, spheres that sprout from a metallic branch.

These pieces name something on their own deliberately ambiguous terms: they do not wager on immediate transparency, but rather on allowing the tension between their elements to enable those who approach them to take another glance. They signal a limit: the point up until concepts and categories we feel comfortable with function, after which one must recur to a creative amazement. *El fantasma de la libertad* (*The Phantom of Liberty*) is a stove, an object made to foster fire and guarantee survival; but this is a wooden stove, which in spite of simulating a particular quality, will be unavoidably consumed before fulfilling its promise. This can be the real effect of the "flame of liberty" that migrants seek carrying their culture, or any fire with which we delude ourselves will take us out of the darkness. The latent provocation in these pieces is made literal in *Line out*, a blanket that the spectator can alter since one of its threads goes through the glass onto the street; as such, any passerby can touch the work and pull it towards themselves, destroying that which made it desirable. It is a blanket made for leaving those who covet it without shelter.

Cynthia Gutiérrez' alienated objects combine a cosmic approximation with a political posture. She conceives art as a violent regeneration of the world: art provides alternative beings with a body that might have arisen during the various ages of time. The forms, the dramas that art proposes are there (like the ring-shaped knot in the bark of a tree in which she inserts a pencil with precision), but the human trace adds something additional. Her imprint also expresses the anguish of its fugacity, giving off an unavoidable tenderness, even in the most terrible scenes.

Yet human presence does not only indicate our ephemeral condition, but also, our moral condition, and with that the responsibility we have for our acts, no matter how fleeting. In an epoch in which cynicism normalizes genocides, environmental devastation, impunity, and indolence, art can reveal the fiction that sustains the state of things. *Decapitados: una decoración para nuestro tiempo* (*Decapitated: a decoration for our times*) takes to an extreme the attitudes of those who govern as well as citizens when facing barbarity; if we do not stop our daily life in front of such disgrace, if we only see it as a nuance we can ignore, this piece is here, let's decorate our apathy with it. Additionally, *Notas de carnaval* (*Carnival Notes*) judges our self-satisfied nature by criticizing the uses of reason, by constructing a machine that showcases ingenuity only to facilitate anyone's repetition - impersonally, *efficiently* - the spectacle of cut off heads that has settled among us.

Looking at these pieces, grasping these pieces, is a sort of exile, an expulsion from the comfortable place from which we let days go by in order to see what is normal to us with the wonder, fear and fascination which someone from another planet might see it with.