

Robar lo que me pertenece

Magali Lara

Paul Cézanne believed that painting in gray made a painter: “On n’est pas un peintre, tant q’on n’a pas peint un gris.” This idea, postulated in the context of the 21st century—as suggested by philosopher Peter Sloterdijk—defines gray as the chromatic principle by which the complex keys to life and thought can be found. Cézanne’s lesson on this color that barely bears light, implies understanding the meanings commonly attributed to it: neutrality, indifference, mediocrity, apathy, lawless space, or action that comes from the shadows.

Artist Magali Lara (Mexico City, 1958) is not afraid of the use of gray within the realm of visual poetry. Lara has developed a direct yet sophisticated pictorial language, in which painting and drawing merge in a gestural space filled with objects, elements, feelings, emotions, moods, and flowers. A cult artist, Lara began her career by making feminist-leaning vignettes and narratives—not exempt from irony and humor—of animated objects. These works bore a clear relationship to comics and graphic novels. Over four decades, the artist has created a significant body of paintings through which stains and chromatic atmospheres aim to explore the political and poetic nature of the grisaille from a female perspective. Lara has also produced a collection of artist books, in which the relationship between image and word modulates powerful personal reflections on sexuality, desire, death, love, and motherhood, as well as the lightness and setbacks of existence.

Lara, who has dedicated many years to teaching art, has earned a solid reputation dating back to her participation, at the end of the seventies, in Março, a semiotically driven group. Since that time, Lara has been contributing to debates about language and sexual differences that led her to the adoption of experimental modalities and to create publications. In her own words: “*We were looking for a way to work from another place, from a difference. Not only because of the experiences of the female body, a body sexualized in a particular way. We sought an experience: creating certain types of objects, of artistic experiences, related to a different way of understanding the body, a body constantly censored, violated, defined by authorities.*”

Lara's work reveals the gray zones of intimacy and femininity in the everyday life, without disdaining the activist possibilities of *post-painterly painting*. Her rigorous practice, based in consistent studio work, has allowed her to undertake numerous collaborations with other artists, poets, writers, and musicians throughout her career, through which she has enhanced the possibilities of painting and drawing—not as binary entities but as parts of a whole.

This first solo exhibition at the Galería RGR highlights a set of works made over the years in oil, graphics, gouache, and textiles, as well as artist books. This sample includes a significant selection from the early series *Miedo* (Fear) and the installation piece *Glaciares*, in which Lara demonstrates that her great ability to paint *in gray* works hand in hand with the retinal, atmospheric, and metaphorical mutability of this color, which best enunciates the subjectivity of the present.

Gabriela Rangel