

GATHERING / RESTITUTION

Appointments around America

By Teresa Pereda

Gathering / Restitution. Appointments around America is an ongoing project that grew out of planned journeys through the Americas, an extension of my travels through Argentina in the 1990s.

As I move ahead, the common denominator of all the situations I create on my journeys is that I request and give soils, intertwining and balling wool.

My point of departure is a state of alertness, sensitivity; I am located in direct experience, in the unstable territory of process.

I affect and am affected by geographies and people I encounter. Hence, exchange, action, ensues. Together, we enter into symbolic time and space, where differences converge, and encounter becomes a metaphor of social, historical and cultural recovery.

In this installation, I bring together the works born from the actions that locals and I undertook together in the early phases of my project Citas por América (Appointments around America). The first such action took place in Ushuaia, where I participated in the Argentine delegation to the I Bienal del Fin del Mundo. I was able to further the project in Uyu-ni and in the Amazon thanks to the generosity of Charly Nijensohn, who invited me along on his travels through the Americas. On both occasions, we were accompanied by Juan Pablo Ferlat, with whom I also did the post-production work. I wish to thank them both.

After the appointments in more distant locations, the fourth phase of the project was carried out here in Cronopios. In the context of this ins-

tallation, I summon to a gathering, in an appointment, for the collective construction of a space-time encounter and conciliation.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in this project; without them, my work would not have been, and would not be, possible. I would also like to draw attention to the materials that these actions entail, because I consider them bearers of vital energy: soil, sought out, gathered, offered, and wool, spun, stretched, interwoven. Both of them capable of forging endless nexuses.

Soil

I first used soil in my work in an artist's book whose pages were made from soil (1994-1996). I learned about an ecological foundation that had asked all the schools in the country to send soil, which was stored in the foundation's courtyard. I was dazzled by the idea that the entire country could be held in a courtyard... That was the source of the soil for my book. As I recall, that soil and fiber paper was dark and slightly rough surface. It was noble, permeable, generous, like soil itself, in working on those sheets, I was seized by what I would call a newcomer's fascination. I was aware of being in a new space where my own skin could stretch, dissolve. Mysteriously, endlessly, silently, that soil paper could be permeated by water, by ink, by watercolor paint...

Two years later, in *El libro de las cuatro tierras* (The book of Four Soils, 1998), I wrote a sort of epilogue: ...I wrote on the ground of my country. I was horizon, sky. I was rock.

By then I was traveling more and more, and my work in the studio was giving way to work in nature. In planned journeys, I visited a number of different rural areas in Argentina first, and then the rest of the Americas.

In each of these places, my first contact involves the act of walking.

As a way of binding the landscape to the horizon, I explore spaces so open that I find them oppressive. Their magnitude both consumes and supports me, places me.

On the soil I am subject to wind and rain, dew and frost... below, the still heat and the silence of rivers that I can't see with my eyes. I feel rough whitish dust between my teeth. I chew. I move about, certain that ancient soil holds me up.

Beside me, people, earlier people, contemporary people.

At the encounters I request and receive soil. With the help of locals, at each place I deposit soil from other regions brought along for the express purpose of being left, given over: gathering-restitution, that is the ritual.

Wool

I first used wool in my work for a performance in the forest of Yatana, Ushuaia, in the context of the I Bienal del Fin del Mundo (2007).

Yatana means "to weave" in the Yaghan language. It occurred to me to thank the place and its people by bringing from Buenos Aires 38 kilograms of wool to be used in the action at the close of the performance.

The outcome surprised me.

When the possibility of traveling to Uyuni arose, I once again decided to take wool along, as if the place itself -that Andean region of ancient weavers and their culture- had asked me to. I traveled there in January, the time of year when the animals' ears are "flowered" with ribbons of colored wool; it occurred to me that we could also "flower" the ball of yarn.

Once again, what came to pass was more than what had been imagined... I rolled the ball of yarn over the rough and dry Andean plateau and walked down the wool's path.

Initially, the trip to the Amazon was not particularly conducive to taking wool -they weave with vegetable fibers there-, but I imagined sending the ball of yarn down rivers and making it roll through the jungle. It didn't matter to me if it lost shape when it got wet. I knew that it would be "phagocytosized" by the plant life and the water, that it would "dissolve" into nature.

From my childhood, I remember the annual shearing... a mix of sensations: the sound of baaing, the urine, the grease and the fermented grass that surrounded me. The smell of the wool was strong; white and oily, tender and necessary, because the whole year's work culminated with the shearing. Today, I am seduced by the feel, the sight and the scent of wool, I identify with a ball of wool's ability to roll, to move on and to bind. Its presence is so full that it is like a person, it takes on a "spirit". Sometimes I see myself as the ball of wool itself. Soft, I adapt to roughness, to distance, but I don't stop moving and hence keep binding, connecting situations, persons...

Persons

As I wrote in *El libro de las cuatro tierras*, when I started planning my journeys I was motivated by the wish to "locate" those who constituted a link between the past and the present of their land.

The encounters with those people, many of them inhabitants of very remote places, were both ethereal and overwhelming... among the most intense experiences I have ever had.

My recurring and gradual contact with different situations and settings took me to another level of awareness, confronting me with questions that have yet to be answered.

Each silence, each word... pain, beyond description, comes before me.

Sometimes, I receive. Sometime, I give. They formulate, suggest. I

listen, learn. I summon, they teach me; I request, connect.

And mostly, I sense and share love, the only antidote for absolute orphanhood.

Teresa Pereda

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