

Contrary to what common sense indicates, the body is never a given; in each case it needs to be inhabited, sewn, articulated. Hence the importance of asking ourselves: what does a body actually do? Coming back to the Lacanian key principle, we could say that having a body means being able to do something with it. The mechanisms and techniques to create imaginary consistencies of bodies are multiple and their influence is powerful on our pleasure and desire¹. However, there are always parts of it that do not quite fit in, which are not adequate; quite the contrary, they are disturbing and excessive.

Sara Ahmed argues that many imperatives establish what the correct relationships are supposed to be. They mark the position that the bodies must occupy from their expectations. A technique that has seen its maximum expression in the rationality of modern thought and the categories of abstraction where the tendency is to erase all the singularities of noisy, diverse and multiform bodies.

In the history of Western thought, it is probably Friedrich Nietzsche who puts the body back into the pulse of reflection, rescuing it from a long oblivion. In contemporary times, various bodies have made their own bodies their battlefield. The body is formed through “unstable relational spaces”², it is made in the configuration of a repetition of gestures and movements that constitute it. Individuals are not the sum of their general impressions, but the stitching and overflow of their singular impressions. The body is always a threshold of variation, therefore, the challenge that our time puts us before is to place ourselves on the edges from which to pierce the identities that are assigned to us. An overflow that, due to disaggregation or excess, is articulated in its tension with life.

Rules aspire to create a circle between obedience and the usefulness of the body that draws a diagram on the work we have done on our movements. This is why the question about bodies is urgent again today. In a context of growing desertification, where most of our relationships are mediated by various comfort devices, *a crack asks for its own place*.

What we can do with the body we have is not a construction of a voluntaristic subjectivity. Rather than that, each body counts, and each body does as it can by using the tools it has within reach. The body develops on its own path, which in most cases is not chosen but gone through. The body is an always unfinished process by which it is shaped in its reiteration, by sedimentation, but also in its own dislocation.

We are not a body; we have one. In fact, most of the time, the relationship with our body is that of an open question *that does not give way*. From its strangeness and from the fact of not fitting in, the body makes its own place. In the same way, bodies that are absent compromise an appearance.

Beyond the conflictive and affectionate relationships that we may have with our bodies, it enlivens the memory that the skin is what we cannot see unless it is in mediation with what it contains. The skin is an edge that feels³.

In *Teoria dels cossos* Oriol Vilapuig allows himself to be taken by the restlessness of the concrete contingency of bodies. His work breaks the contours of moderation and modelling from which

1 I am grateful for the dialogues with Ana Cecilia González, to whom I owe these reflections.

2 val flores, “Especies de indisciplinada. Pedagogías transnadas y metodologías queer”, en: AAVV, Pedagogías transgresoras II, Ediciones Bocabulario, Santa Fé, 2018, p.144.

3 Sara Ahmed, Jackie Stacey, *Thinking Through the Skin*, Routledge, New York, 2001.

we incorporate the ways of functioning of corporeality. Pieces of meat, hair, marks, scars, gestures, asymmetries, ghosts, wounds, and dreams which fail in the responsibility of their own representation. An open economy that is not directed along a line of continuity but rather surrounding something, embracing its excess, approaching it from multiple perspectives, besieging it, withdrawing. As Mani Kaul says, “the sensuality of an object is manifested at a given moment from a single angle of vision. But if you surround an object, incorporate aspects from different perspectives, and stack them on top of the object, you destroy the sensual relationship with the object”⁴. It is here where the possibility for an unregulated experience opens. A material thought, which is a fragile one, can only remain open like this.

That is why this type of practice puts us in a situation that requires an nimble dance, like that of those who grow up walking with bare feet, because they know in their own bodies that in order to trace routes it is impossible to ignore the instability of the world, the porous force of irregularity and that looks are only configured in a common dispossession since, in the experience of an image that challenges us, we are dispossessed, exposed.

It is necessary to alter the protocols of images if we want to be willing to hear their echo, so that in their amplification and contagion they warn us of the tributary regimes of linguistics, to consider the body once again in its multiple forms and in the richness of its desiring energies. Pulse by pulse, a fracture in fluidity is being forged, but not a claim to take up a place in the distribution of visibilities, rather from the understanding that a visible scene is always the creation of a space and a time that sustains and is sustained thanks to what cannot be formulated in an image. However, it generates a power that can disturb the connection regime and launch another. It is no coincidence that the exhibition opens with the firm step of a man who is about to step on a ground which is cracking.

Between the body of images and the images of the body, Vilapuig articulates a passage of crossings, a mechanics of body flows linked by the difference that forms them. A voluptuous knowledge that derives from touching⁵. The type of knowledge that is displayed here is of a different nature; it is formed in the opposite sense to the synthesis that brings together a regularity and is built as a category from which to explain a certain world. A knowledge that embraces a multiplicity of singularities without a defined orientation, which even opens the question of where we should begin to see, where, in fact, the decisive element is the opening.

A body that touches is a body that exposes itself.

A thought develops its relationships by what it is touched by. Something comes to us in the images that are formed in the folds of the situations of which we take part in, an echo of the images that refers to that detour without return of the multiplicity that resists being articulated under a unit, a space of resonance. Where nothing and no one is manifested. Perhaps for this reason, the work of Oriol Vilapuig is so difficult to classify, because it touches us with the deep layers of the being that are formed on the surfaces, between bestiaries, deep nights, newspaper clippings, bodies made of holes, pupils, nostrils, open mouths that are abysses and do not fit into a determined space. Although the accentuation of Vilapuig’s hollowness bothers us, it is also the indelible memory of his opacity. An excessive body that does not fit, that flows, exceeds, and even in its adequacy is always inadequate.

Between modesty, pride and horror, “a thought that does not allow itself to be recorded by the weight

4 Mani Kaul, *Escuchamos y vemos y sentimos y entonces pensamos*, Lumière, Barcelona, 2021.

5 Michel Serres, *La naissance de la Physique dans le text de Lucrèce*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1977, p.131.

of giving up on the imaginative, desiring body”⁶, images that are like a contortion in the wind, *a candle burning in peace*, that confront us with a tension that cannot be resolved, that inhabits us and stirs us up.

Cupping the hands to welcome the echoes, cupping the images to compose another ecology, other landscapes that shape relationships both in terms of impressions and surfaces, as well as a congestion of signs that must be managed. In this sense, resonance does not consist in experiencing one’s own echo that is returned amplified by a surface that contains it; on the contrary, resonance brings something new. Resonance arises when “the vibration of one body stimulates the vibration of another”⁷. Somehow, resonating is a reaction to other bodies. The skin is an organ of resonance, breathing is a communicative relationship with the world. Each body and each thing have a materiality and a temperature to which we can be sensitive or not.

The image is an indeterminate area where to project a meaning, it can only constitute meaning and dissipate those that have been sedimented if it is considered in its movement, in its choreography. What we see does not make impressions; what we see generates sensitive movements.

Sometimes, to understand that we are involved in the game it is necessary to start from something that hurts us, that damages us. But, at the same time, the capacity to generate situations is formed in our desiring forces, which enables us to play with the repeated forms. We verify continuities to test relationships, to move them into the thickness of the bodies.

What relationship does a body establish with the form it pretends to be?

Desire has known social forms and exhausted bodies that have even forgotten their lust. This is precisely what does not work at all, the failure that puts us in contact with ourselves. Culture begins with postponing pleasure; the conquest of fire would have been giving up the pleasure of extinguishing it⁸. From the delicate work with what *there is*, the residual corners or the symbolic imaginaries that have organised our worlds, from the pulsation of the images - an accomplice of diverse materialities -, Vilapuig allows us to ask ourselves: how can we think when we are short of breath? How can we relate to our desire? Where do we put life? How are we looked at by what looks at us?

In the plexus of movement, we are searching for a sense of rhythm to *go after something more* than what we already know we are. To sculpt the material conditions that can change the shape of *ourselves* in the images. If the shapes are the scars of metamorphoses⁹, exercising the ability to receive a shape is also preparing oneself for a reality pregnant with mystery but, above all, the ability to be able to tear oneself up a little.

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Barcelona, July 10, 2023

6 Marcela Rivera Hutinel, *Pensar por imágenes: Montaigne y la caída*, Cuadro de Tiza, Santiago de Chile, 2020, p.17.

7 Harmut Rosa, Resonancia. *Una sociología de la relación con el mundo*, Katz, Madrid, 2019, p.79.

8 Sigmund Freud, *El malestar en la cultura*, Alianza, Madrid, 2010.

9 Emanuele Coccia, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*, Les rencontres philosophiques de Monaco, 2018, p.26.

TEORIA DELS COSSOS — oriol vilapuig

14.09.23 - 11.11.23



oriol vilapuig, **S.T.** (2023), digital print on paper

The overflowing of bodies

Suspensions about the body have a long, dense, and stratified history in Western tradition, placing reason in a privileged spot, of governance over passions and a disorganised life. A warning keeps repeating itself: we should not trust our senses, for the knowledge that the body provides us is changeable, desires are deceptive and pleasure distances us from good and happiness. In fact, practicing the virtues has historically involved domesticating the body, acquiring habits that allow us to behave in accordance with a contemplative life that dominates the desiring dimension of existence. This rejection or denial of the body has marked a way of organising our sensibility, but also our world; in particular, its ways of production and subjectivation. A normativity that denies the knowledge of the body and its power.

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