

CRISTINA GARRIDO

They are these or they maybe others

16.01.15 – 14.03.15

When we go in the space of the exhibition *They are these or they maybe others*, we are taken into a world that is very familiar: the world of computer and smartphone screens. But there is a crucial and intentional difference: here we are, in a physical, palpable space, with light and temperature changes and other shifts that we can only encounter in a place that surpasses the world of the screen.

This conversion, that we face here when crossing from the virtual to the real, is part of Cristina Garrido's (1986, Madrid) work process. It's about transposing or re-contextualizing material she finds, which she appropriates and subjects to a metamorphosis.

In the last decades, archive material has been an object of desire for contemporary art. But the way the archive is treated takes different forms that, in a first reading, seem to show antagonistic interests: either revealing moments of a past it was not possible for us to witness, or showing multiple realities in a constant mutating present, so fast it is impossible to keep up with.

It is precisely in this impossibility that lays that same object of desire for the archive and its different uses: however you look at it - a subject that has passed or a moment that is going too fast - we are not witnessing it in the flesh.

And it is also in this impossibility that Cristina Garrido builds her lexicon. Basing it on archives of platforms as *Contemporary Art Daily*, *This is Tomorrow*, gallery websites and social networks, she has built a digital archive of about 2.500 images grouped in 21 categories, that correspond to exhibitions all around the world in the last four years, in a quest that would be impossible to witness in person.

These images form the basis of construction of the eight *memes* (of a series of 17) of 100 x 66 cm that the exhibition comprises. Sentences over the photographs, painted with white paint and black outline, describe them matter-of-factly in a way that reminds us of *One and Three Chairs* (1965) by Joseph Kosuth. The groups "Stands with hanging elements", "Things leaning on the wall and the floor", "Cardboard boxes", "Creased things on the floor", "Plants", "Folding screens", "Rugs" and "Canvases hanging directly on the wall" appear one by one, with such rigour that we question whether we are looking at photos of exhibitions that have actually really happened. To anyone that goes to see a couple of exhibitions a year, in any part of the world, it is impossible not to smile. This type of formal representation is recurrent in contemporary art exhibitions, regardless the concepts they entail.

The choice of visually translating it into *memes* is not an innocent one. *Mememes* have their origin in biology, which defines them as genetic and non-genetic data that spreads as a virus through its body transmitters (Richard Dawkin, 1976). Internet *mememes*, low-resolution images with white lettering and black outline, almost always written with the font *Impact*, all start on the same assumption: spreading the virus. The way we see art has changed with the passing of time: it is less likely that we see art in museums, biennales, galleries and, even less likely, in studio visits, than in a screen of a machine connected to the Internet, sitting down in the apparent comfort of a society said to be evolved, contemporary. Instead of saying to someone to go see an exhibition, we share the photograph of an exhibition in some social network. Someone sees it, somewhere in the global village that McLuhan anticipated in the 1960s, and they (re)share it. And so forth, in a viral thread.

When analysing critically the changes in the way we see art, Cristina Garrido uses images she has found, repeatedly, and places the focus in the origin of these images that are, usually, legitimated in unison as representative of contemporary art exhibitions. The images we see here are not the originals, from the digital archive she has compiled but stagings photographed by the artist. In fact, it would be impossible to reach the original images, as in social networks we are constantly sharing copies of copies, in a process similar to photocopies but in a digital environment. These images are therefore a double repetition: formally they are digital copies and conceptually they are copies - intentional copies of ideas. She observed the images she found and categorized them, subjecting them to mimicry, purposely presenting them as *mememes* that they are. Viral by definition, *mememes* are copies and, being copies, they do not have the value of a unique work of art. Nevertheless, here, even though formally they are represented as *mememes*, they are unique photographic images - their letters are hand painted, in a clear reference to Painting. By painting the photographs, Cristina Garrido is reinforcing the crossing from immaterial to material.

In this process of transition and metamorphosis, she causes a change in the meaning and the value of the object which she appropriates. What is the value of the series of photographs here presented? Are these (the ones that present themselves as technically unique) or are the others (the ones that originated the images here presented) more valuable? It is in these questions that the complex construction of the body of work *They are these or they maybe others* states itself as a moment of reflection by Cristina Garrido about the understanding of the processes that determine the commercial value of art and its legitimization. Whichever the case, the processes escape the control of the artist.

Luísa Santos, 10.12.2014