

Penumbras
Yanira Collado

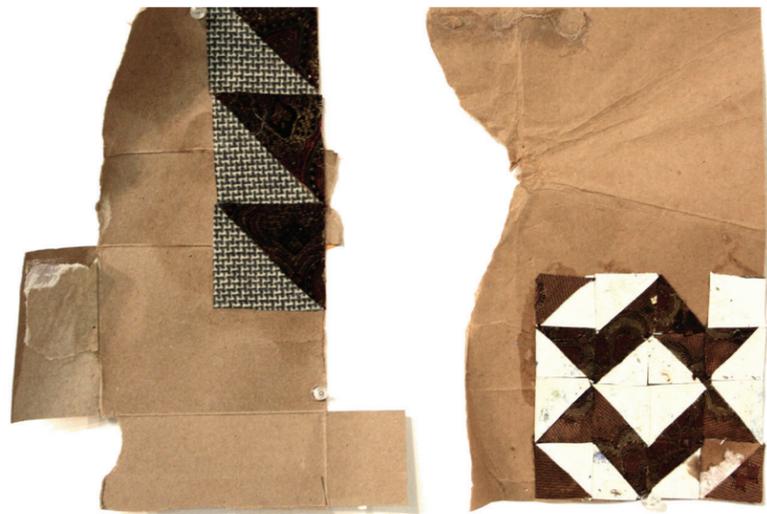


Ernesto Oroza

There are places where people must repair their objects so much that they decide to leave them open, disassembled; their guts splayed out on tables, couches, floors. Cables remain exposed, electronic parts liberated, chassis unscrewed. Destruction, paradoxically, accelerates repair work. They take these shortcuts through junk piles to prevent the television from changing channels without warning—just when the novela is getting good—, or to make it change channels even when the selector is broken; for the radio to hold—without turning off—a handful of batteries strapped to it with tape, like to the body of a suicide-bomber about to go off. The stream of white, black, red, green, blue, yellow, brown, grey cables floods the table, bifurcates in order to flow between transistors, Bakelite buttons, thermostats, winding motors, pierced plastic housings, screws, antennas, magnets. If we pay attention we can recognize, almost everywhere, small printed letters and numbers, sometimes isolated, sometimes in sequences, as if there were a reader in the world for those signs and symbols. As the skein grows, the signs accumulate and seem to form words, sentences, and even paragraphs, regardless of their intelligibility. In any case, reading them wouldn't explain much. The parts of one object overlap with those of another, they interweave, entangle and become confused. It would be impossible to locate where the blender begins and the iron ends, which switch turns on what machine, which nut catches the flagellum of what screw, which cracks let out what heat, which antennas catch what signals.

The landscape over the tables, the armchairs, the living room floor is no different than if we threw, all at once, all of our appliances from a balcony into the street. The force of gravity that would break them into fragments is no stronger than the force of need that, at home, disassembles them to maintain the rite of domestic life.

But perhaps this image can only offer an idea of the whole, sacrificing that which makes it most powerful: the fragment. Fragments that no longer belong to a totality. I am speaking to the idea that on those tables and those couches, in a sense upholstered in detritus, we would also find strange, alien bodies, come from other systems. Among the mechanical parts of a lamp we might find the screwed-in fragment of a deodorant container whose cap, when manipulated, turns on the bulb; the end of a melted toothbrush—amorphous, tumorous—covers a velocity



untitled, 2018

regulator whose metal axis can't be caught and spun with our own fingers, but that we can now adjust thanks to that melted-plastic mold. I should be able to write a sentence just as hybrid, with words and letters come from elsewhere, but appearing without warning—fruits— or crossing through the cen-darkness-ter of another word. But if I have restricted this description to the living room, to a jumble on the table and the couch, it has been done so as to not scare—with more exposed guts—the reader who, now trained, won't be bothered at imagining that the same thing occurs in the kitchen, in the rooms, in the yard, on the balcony. Parts jump from one area of the house to another. The circular grate designed to hide the blades of a fan now serves as a hanging planter to a few ferns by the window; in the yard, a dog sleeps in the plastic housing of an old Japanese TV.

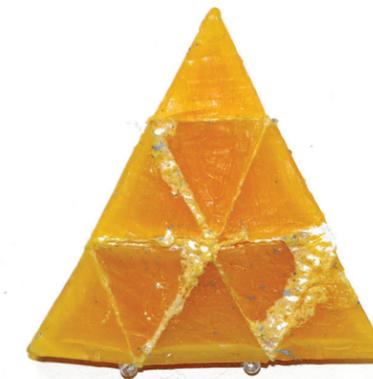
The slaughter described above undoubtedly points to a disinterest in wholes, a disaffection for the closed, exclusive thing. But at the same time, this disassembly appears to be the only possible way to meet certain needs, and to protect the permanence of certain rites that sustain the drama of human life. How could these people, otherwise, continue reading under the lamp light; or listen to the sweet voice coming daily from the radio, or from wherever, for there is nothing resembling a radio on the table anymore. Isn't digging through the chaos of the world the only way—and hasn't it been—to sustain our existence? "The rite of architecture is performed in order to make real a space that before the rite was not," wrote the Italian radical architect Ettore Sottsass. Isn't a rite the medium through which we turn destruction into life? Architecture is, according to Sottsass, a rite of invocation: "the universe is invoked and fostered through

the building of a house," and this is "the rebuilding of the space of the universe." A rite, according to this idea, can be understood as a medium of production by invocation. It is almost the first technology, though the object is not a result of the ritual, it is its precipitate. Given that its forms, its geometry, its signs are just as inscribed in the object as the material that constitutes it. I'm thinking, now, of the sphere found in Malta (Paleolithic Siberia) and that seems to be the work of the oldest Europeans. This sphere is one of the first examples of sacred geometry. It is a stone with a dark surface out of which emerges a faint geometric, abstract pattern that carried out, it seems, a divinatory function. The sphere—even when we can't be sure that this individual knew of the roundness of the planet and the cosmos—is a clear exercise in the reconstruction of the terrestrial globe, for the signs recorded on its surface wrap it in a perfect continuity. This sphere is a divinatory object, and a seer needs a shred of perspective, a point from which to look out, a peephole, to be situated in a space and in a model of time. The creation of this object is the rite of architecture. Sottsass reminds us: "Architecture lives within this coexistence of invocation and presumption, it thrives on a magical will and, according to the orders, cadences and meticulous process of rites, it reconstructs the great chaotic space of the universe. By means of static symbols cast in stone and raised up against the sky, it exists by creating the mark of human presence, which is the mark of human convention."

Rite is experience—consciousness—and at the same time it is the vector that transmits it; it is the reserve, the intangible place where knowledge accumulates, but also the medium by which it flows, reproduces, multiplies. But above all, rite is the projection of a geometry from an order. On the one hand, it creates the space that "did not exist before the rite," and on the other, it inscribes time in that space. We know that the first alphabets came from the systematization of the first sacred scriptures. Those symbols of invocation became archetypes of synthesis, hieroglyphs, ideograms; in the West, letters. That is to say that their communicative function is an inseparable part of them. This is what Sottsass tells us when he refers to "the mark of human convention."

It's clear that all the preceding paragraphs also serve to invoke. The architecture I've tried to construct here is my interpretation of Yanira Collado's work. I know my text is brimming with fragments, fragility, and uncertainty—I have tried to make myself echo her resources, as if I could give them a geometric order, trap them in lines, in words, in repetitions. I've used her works on carbon paper to guide myself—they're geometric drawings on black sheets that roll out, like maps, as if we were unrolling the surface of that first black rock from Malta. My text, like each drawing

of this carbon paper series that she calls Penumbra, could be replicated, in this paper that you are holding, and in the other copies that other visitors of this exhibit will take home. I've visited her studio and I had the impression of having been inside the enormous pocket of a child, or in that of a homeless person's who needed to have a rusted nail, a stick of soap, a piece of fabric, and a rock on hand because the world is hard. Yanira's studio is a holdout of organic, mineral, artificial fragments. The only totality that wanders about and reigns there is a black cat. Everything else is fragments, some dispersed, others synchronized, following old rituals. She explains to me why she thinks that the pieces of fabric (rolled up and piled like scrolls on a shelf) are positioned as they are, and the conversation takes us to the tailoring business her mother had in the Miami of the 80s. Every part of her studio is an index, and a precipitate, of complex cultural processes. Migration, multiethnic family memories, her pedagogical vocation—as if they made up a binding agent—would be the only possibility of relating all the fragments. It's true that, sometimes, in her studio, the materials seem on occasion to rise from the tables and form clusters on the walls, but in general everything is scattered about, as if the cat had helped her take everything apart. This is why when I see her work in an exhibit or in a publication, I know I'm attending a rite. And I know it has created a space, which did not exist before that rite.



fuku dos, 2018

**Penumbra
Yanira Collado**

Opening Reception 4 - 7PM
January 27, 2019

Closing Reception Noon - 3PM
Sunday, March 10th