

Sabrina Amrani is pleased to announce *Topografía del borrado* by Gabriela Bettini, the first exhibition of the artist in the gallery, for Apertura Madrid Gallery Weekend.



Mule deer, 2020. Oil on linen. 162 x 207 cm.

Topografía del borrado is a song to nature and at the same time a profound criticism of western man's relationship with it. The landscapes of Gabriela Bettini transport us to the museums of natural history, to the canned landscape in the dioramas, to a nature that is exhibited encapsulated together with stuffed, extinct or endangered species, which no longer live in their natural habitats because these also become extinct under the boot of intensive monoculture. The artist denounces not only the serious mistake of trying to own the land but also the desire to transform it, in a massive way, into a cultivation field to cover our needs and even further, the enrichment of large corporations. Bettini denounces the right that western man has attributed himself to exploit the world and everything that lives in it: both plants and animals.

The artist's delicate work brings us back to the world of the pioneers of scientific and/or botanical landscape painting at a time when expeditions were carried out spanning the entire globe and having its peak in the 19th century. These expeditions went to the 'rescue' of a hidden and remote world, beyond the limits dominated by western man, to bring it before the eyes of the public from main cities of civilization. The well-known formula was and remains the diorama. "Classic habitat dioramas stem from a long tradition of collecting and displaying natural specimens. Its three main components are: animals in taxidermy; the foreground, which includes all the details in three dimensions that accompany the animals, and the landscape painting on a curved wall, of essential importance to create the illusion of the environment, space and distance", explains Bettini. The artist's work gathers the formula of the diorama and just as it represents nature, *Topografía del borrado* strips the representation

itself. As if it were a Droste effect, Bettini's oil paintings dissect the landscapes of the set itself, perhaps leaving them in some evidence. The taxidermy species that populated them, the true protagonists, are no longer there as they probably aren't neither in the real world that these capsules are trying to copy.

"The book *Windows on Nature*, published by the American Museum of Natural History, explains that dioramas were born in response to the growing awareness that wildlife and fragile ecosystems aroused in the public," says the artist. According to this book, dioramas were created to promote love and concern for nature. And although it assured that the objective was to protect and preserve, the paradox is that in those expeditions, some were dedicated to painting while others were devoted to hunting animal specimens of all kinds. These large caravans borne in the name of science and knowledge were dedicated to capturing landscapes and animals alike, to make them their own, in favor of lifeless representation. The divulgation and conservationist vocation that was proclaimed acquired a perverse dynamic with the decimation of specimens, the irruption and denaturation of the habitats themselves. More than understanding and protecting nature, western man created a dead representation of it in an attempt to possess it. The conquered lands became a museum setting, an expedition souvenir. "The landscape backgrounds of the dioramas are the starting point of a series of large-format paintings in which all the attention shifts to the moment of construction of the artifice of nature through landscape painting", explains Bettini.

Paradoxically, it seems that as the museums have been filled with souvenirs, the world has been emptying of its natural soul. The conquest of the environment implies a transformation, a domestication that often results in monoculture. Taking as reference the reflections of *The Monocultures of the Mind*, by Vandana Shiva, Gabriela Bettini represents her concern for biodiversity and the cultures of the global south supported by it, threatened by the process of erasing everything that does not fit the hegemonic North Atlantic model. The artist's proposal includes, on the one hand, the idea of the museum organization and archive process and, on the other, the silent erasure and disappearance of all elements dissident from domestication: large mammals, birds and even natural regions themselves.

Her current interests lie in the study of the first cultural colonialisation and how it relates to its present-day legacy. Using the history of painting and the representation of landscape as her point of departure – observing how this medium has been used to reinforce the ideas that form the basis of Western hegemony – she analyses today's environmental crisis and the extractivist model it espouses, one where women become a paradigm of the multiple violence inflicted by climate change.

Gabriela Bettini has worked with the idea of Postmemory in a series of pieces which revisit the dominant narratives of a generation that experienced the Argentinian dictatorship; these works directly link historical archives with her subjects' own life stories. In addition, many of her projects have revolved around domestic spaces, which she has often examined with the eyes, curiosity and astonishment of an outsider, of someone who has inherited the condition of exile from the previous generation.

Gabriela Bettini
Topografía del borrado
10 Sept – 14 Nov 2020
Calle Madera, 23
hello@sabrinaamrani.com
Tel.: +34 910 69 03 22

S A B R I N A A M R A N I

#topografiadelborrado
#gabrielabettini
#sabrinaamrani
#Apertura2020
#MadridGalleryWeekend2020

Project carried out with the support of the Aid for Creation in Visual Arts 2020 of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Community of Madrid

