

# On the way to the stars

In her life, Cristina Ataíde must have learned the value of small things and the desire to look far away. Bit by bit, observing the wanderings of the world, she has constructed her very own personal and artistic process that now is brought together in these three rooms of Galeria Belo-Galsterer, proposing observations and sensations, which lay beyond us.

Between drawing and sculpture, this exhibition imitates the trajectory that ascends from earth to the firmament, inviting us to look at the floor we walk on and the sky above our heads, thus integrating us into the bigger scene. With the suggestive title "Under All of This", these recent works by the artist do remind us of our position in the universe. Dust in our astonished eyes, we should try this path, growing whilst walking on it, integrating it naturally and good humouredly, understanding where we belong to and relativizing everything else – the end included.

Remembering this, the exhibition begins with several drawings in warm shades of red, saturated with pigments and magnetic as solid bodies, formed by colour helping them escaping their bi-dimensionality. The presence of these drawings connects with the earlier oeuvre of the artist, with her works capturing earthly textures, as well as the worldly materials we step on. Colour is dense and vibrating on paper, bringing itself into space as a proper body, a body of colour and sensations, in everything equal to our own one, recapitulating the sum of our existence. Nevertheless, in the same instant in which the work remembers the earth, it has already arrived at the next element. More than the air, it is the firmament that is awaiting us, like a future in which everything becomes diluted.

And in the next room, Cristina Ataíde will resume drawing as a chromatic corpus in several varieties of red that heat up the star map. Here the floor ends and

our gaze feels tempted to fly out, to do the necessary mapping of paths we only know at a distance of light-years, at the distance of the star's memory. And that's how we find an answer to our prayers: under the line of a stellar cartography that registers the declinations of the stars, or better, its movements through the universe; parallel, from our little erratic terroir, we register its dance, whilst Cristina Ataíde has drawn other maps. They are personal maps, at a human scale, the scale of our gaze, overlapping with the stars, following them, and obeying them.

This cohabitation of stellar tracings with personal registers puts us back into the universe. Not in its centre, where we got away from, but it puts us back into a place that is erratic and wrong, though geometrical and gravitationally rigorous, which liberates us and makes us stronger through the same act that we were rejected through.

Always in need of an observational post, the sculpture appears as a position of analysis. Like a primordial observatory, or relational channel with the universe, this sculptural piece of grand dimensions shares the other room with the maps, inviting us to inhabit it physically, so we can lift our eyes and observe the sky. Comprehensively, standing inside the sculpture, as being inside a space ship, but without any sky on view, this invitation interpellate the imagination and the sculpture – as the light that modulates everything – thus inviting us again onto a visual level.

This proposed observation doesn't please, however, not only our look, as I already referred to, but also the body, our sense of equilibrium, and a sense of participation. Concave and convex circles punctuate the floor of the room. We can step on them, if we dare to, as platforms from which we relate our body with the surrounding space. Feeling the floor to better see the

heavens? Cristina Ataíde reminds us that the ground and the skies are simply two faces of the same universe. Therefore, light is also, a fundamental element in this exhibition. Centred on drawing, capturing in counter-light the piece of sculpture, the artists directs our look, suggests paths, points out into time.

In the third room, a singular object awaits the visitor. Suspended from the ceiling, a tubular marble piece, suggests another optic instrument pointed to the cosmic space. If we try to have a look into it, its structure reaffirms what the stones will never let us forget: their ancestral bodies hold inside them the memories of constellations.

It's rather curious that Cristina Ataíde proposes this way to the stars inside a building. Well, as for good as we know, the house (the home) is the centre of our lives. Axis of all the senses, it is simultaneously the place we leave to get lost and where we come back to, after we have found ourselves. It is also a metaphor for our last place. From here, we observe our life, and that of those we are close to. The world and what sits farer away; the daily and the nightly firmament; the flight of the birds, the quiet murmur of the trees. And the star maps with their choreography of infinite dances.

Well, we know that looking at the star loaded sky is looking onto the past. We know it, because we are aware of the particularly vertiginous velocity of speed of light. We still see stars that have long gone out, transformed into black holes now, eventually time tunnels, and dust – like us. The house (or home) is therefore the best place to observe and to rethink our place in the world; the best place to create awareness of everything; fascinated and responsible. In our bodies and our souls. And with everything around us. Because we are unique and we are Under All of This.

*Emília Ferreira  
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