

Text by Rodolfo Biscia for *Fronterizo y Traslación*

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Fascination and Distance

Although they evoke the abstract power of a divine eye, Mónica Giron's *Eclipses* are nowhere near theology; they partake rather of the intellectual discipline of an imaginary astronomy. They are, above all, devices for training in concentration; the viewer, if willing, lets his attention go back and forth between a mistaken center and everything that trembles or flutters on its edge: incipient swirls, other competing centers that tear off, spirals of molecules that may perhaps suggest the gurgling of the real. Unruly pupils that plea to us from within those large eyes denied the idiosyncratic gift of an iris, eyes that display a Cyclops-like squint without the slightest shame. It is around those slightly off-center pupils that worlds in the making, faint landscapes, apocalyptic clouds of smoke and fire, flutter. A vaguely octagonal template holds these discrete or catastrophic cosmogonies, as well as the dialogue between emptiness and vast abundance, between the bare white of cotton paper and some dynamic rings that, like a belt of gaseous asteroids, threaten to violate the borders of that circular bastion, but never do.

In confronting these odd eclipses, one is the object—the subject?—of an uncontrollable scopic drive. The viewer beholds these machines of pure vision while also being beheld by them. Absorbed, but also rejected, by the force of the white core, the planes of depth may hint at the idea of a dome. Indeed, even when approached frontally, these panoptic eyes are reminiscent of the hollow in the dome of the Roman Pantheon, that bold circular opening, a readily identifiable if precarious symbol of transcendence. In his minute analysis, Peter Sloterdijk understands it to be an exemplary case of the alliance between metaphysics and architecture: emblem of a cosmic order

obtained by force of stylization as well as a certain disdain for the empirical aberrations of the real world. Giron opposes a slightly deranged cosmology to that very classic stability. Because the balance in composition—a decidedly baroque balance, made of pure tension—does not diminish the restlessness generated by imperfect, slightly skewed, alignment. If it is a question of eclipses, one must think of heavenly bodies with unsteady courses that effect variations in off-centeredness as they go by. “As soon as you want to be fully at the heart of something, you are once again thrown to the edge: that is today’s experience of all experiences!” Ulrich shouts out at us in a passage of *The Man Without Qualities*.

If the fascination of these *Eclipses* lies in a subtle effect of intellectual distancing, the *SX* series soothes as it interrogates the ability of two bodies to merge. Notwithstanding its crescendo of virtuosity and technical skill, this series displays a scandalous conceptual romanticism. It suggests pairs of less-than-human figures somewhat reminiscent of amebas and the simplicity that precedes all individualization. These are proto-forms, emotional bodies that crisscross and mirror one another not without distortion. At times their eyeballs intersect and at times they look on idyllically, but they almost always come together as gently as two drops of water: what we see is the spectacle of osmotic relations. In their self-sufficient bounty—which is also hetero-dependent bounty—some of these pairs bring to mind the bisexual beings of which Aristophanes speaks in Plato’s *Symposium*. But, whether paired or single, Giron’s beings also imbue—and are imbued by—the surrounding world. It’s difficult to say whether what we see at the edge is the materialization of a hostile exterior or the caress of amniotic flows, the blunt figuration of the world or the emanation of an aura conceived *à deux*.

Once inside the magic circle of relations of proximity, the interior of these figures is revealed to be as faceted as crystal; it is made of folds, of velaturas, a thousand layers on more layers. Some will see imaginary chakras. Others, equally validly, will see the energetic emanations of a subcutaneous anatomy yielded not by the dissection of a dead body but rather by the cartography, one very much alive, of invisible bonds. There can be no doubt, though, that in the flows and waves of their interaction, the couples in SX stage the act of *fascinagenic* proximity. To put it more simply, they speak to us of the essential tendency for two beings to draw closer.

Heidegger claimed that human existence—that much talked-about *dasein*—is essentially “deseverance.” Proxemics—one of the most evanescent branches of anthropology—was born as the study of how humans regulate distance from persons and things. German philosopher Sloterdijk picked up where that discipline had left off, combining it with Gaston Bachelard’s intuitions to conceive his investigations into the no-less crucial ties between being and space as complementary to *Being and Time*. He called this outrageous science “spherology.” Many of his assertions seem designed to illustrate Giron’s works. Take the following passage: “Long before the axioms of individualist abstraction took hold, psychologist-philosophers of the early Modern ages had made it clear that the interpersonal space was overcrowded with symbiotic, erotic and mimetic-competitive energies that fundamentally deny the illusion of subject autonomy.” And: “Our probing of the microspheric field has shown that human beings are living beings that, in principle, cannot *be*, or be present, anywhere other than the wall-less greenhouses of their relations of proximity. Thus, microspherology is nothing other than a proxemic anthropology.” That which Sloterdijk strives to theorize with so many philosophemes and neologisms, the SX watercolors materialize more immediately by probing, with only pure blotches of color, the flows that connect or disconnect

two beings as streams converging in their common world. Though Giron’s series is on this side of any anthropology, it is a poetic reaffirmation of Sloterdijk’s accidental findings, especially if we bear in mind that microspherology can be described as “a journey eased by the domes of co-subjective intimacy.”

Tying up ends unlikely to be bound elsewhere, Mónica Giron’s recent work flows between the poles of the mental and the affective, between distance and fascination. But going from one series to the other means taking many steps at once: from geometric abstraction to proto-human figuration, and from cosmographic landscape to the landscape of ties surrounding two beings within shared heavens or hells. Sloterdijk might add that Giron goes from the macro-sphere to the micro-sphere. In any case, the path there and back is one and the same: both series—both stories—are written by the same hand and, indeed, in the same ink: watercolors that, while leaving no point on the chromatic scale untouched, forge somber landscapes; quartz splendors that are also the most discreet expression of matter’s density. As if in this question the spirit—or the soul—were everything.

Rodolfo Biscia, May 2013

Translation from Spanish by Jane Brodie.

Readings

The first reference to Peter Sloterdijk is “Excurso 4: Panteón. Sobre la teoría de la cúpula, in *Esferas II. Globos. Macrosterología* [1999], Siruela, Madrid, 2004, pp. 375-401; later references to “Seres humanos en el círculo mágico. Para una historia de ideas de la fascinación de proximidad”, in *Esferas I. Burbujas. Microsterología* [1998], Siruela, Madrid, 2003, pp. 197-244.

English title: *Bubbles: Spheres. Microspherology*