

Paula Salas M.

Portfolio

In my work there are two main lines at hand, the first one consists of pieces of a pictorial nature: paintings and video animations. Through them I investigate traditional themes of art history and painting techniques in combination with new medias, such as stop motion animation. Lately, my paintings and animations have focussed on individual portraits, especially exploring the phenomena of distortion that occurs in the representation of a model. This particular artwork examines the possible intersections between Flemish tradition of portraits, the heritage of latin american painting as well as new medias.

The other line includes “site-specific” projects, many of which have been produced as part of a collective called “Prix”. This method has allowed me to experiment with different medias such as video-documentary, photography and installation. These projects have also given me the chance to combine both lines of creation; producing artwork designed for a particular context that incorporates painting and storytelling as means of expression.

recent work



***Cochinilla*, solo show, Stuart Gallery, Santiago, Chile, 2010.**

This exhibition as a whole explores the territory of a Latin American and Chilean identity. The works presented there, research the past through traditional subjects and techniques, such as colonial painting, mixing them with contemporary notions and medias, like video and performativity. A phenomena depicted in

the three series of paintings is transformation. For the artist, that concept describes the history of Latin America, as a story of deformation and evolution; of adapting one's own constitution to fulfill hegemonic expectations. This show was an invitation to reflect on how Chile and Latin America became what they

are today; it was a symbolic path to review the Chilean history, to observe the stages of the process, and understand how and why the current situation is product of the past. Identity, as an abstract concept, is presented in the series as the result of a process in which some elements remain, while others change or just disappear.



Sequence Doris, oil on canvas, (12 pieces of 20cm x 13cm each). Details of the series at the exhibition *Cochinilla*

This series depicts the transformation of a girl into a Colonial Archangel in twelve stages. The sitter is portrayed in the series as a contemporary person that becomes a character of the past. This transformation evokes a time travel from the present of the painter to the colonial history. This idea is reflected also by the transformation

in the painting style which, in the first pictures, is naturalistic in the proportions and fresh in the pictorial gestures, while in the last ones the figure gets stylized, and the technique becomes tight and detailed, resembling the pictorial colonial style. The images in the middle of the sequence quote the South American portraiture

tradition of the XVIII and XIX century. The sequential structure of the series, not only creates the fiction of a transformation, it also refers to other narrative medias like comic, cinema and video, linking past and present in yet another way.



Series Face studies, oil on canvas, (11 pieces of 17cm x 11cm each), details of the series at the exhibition Cochinilla

This series makes direct use of a colonial pictorial language. Faces are distorted and synthesized according to traditional standards of the religious painting produced many centuries ago in Peru, Bolivia and Chile. However, not all about these images is old, while the painting style and technique come

from the past, the close-up framing of the faces is an invention of photography and a standard framing of cinema. By re-using a colonial aesthetic in combination to up-to-date referents, this series dig up a forgotten past bringing history to the present, in order to look at it from a new perspective.



Series Face Studies, detail of the series at the exhibition



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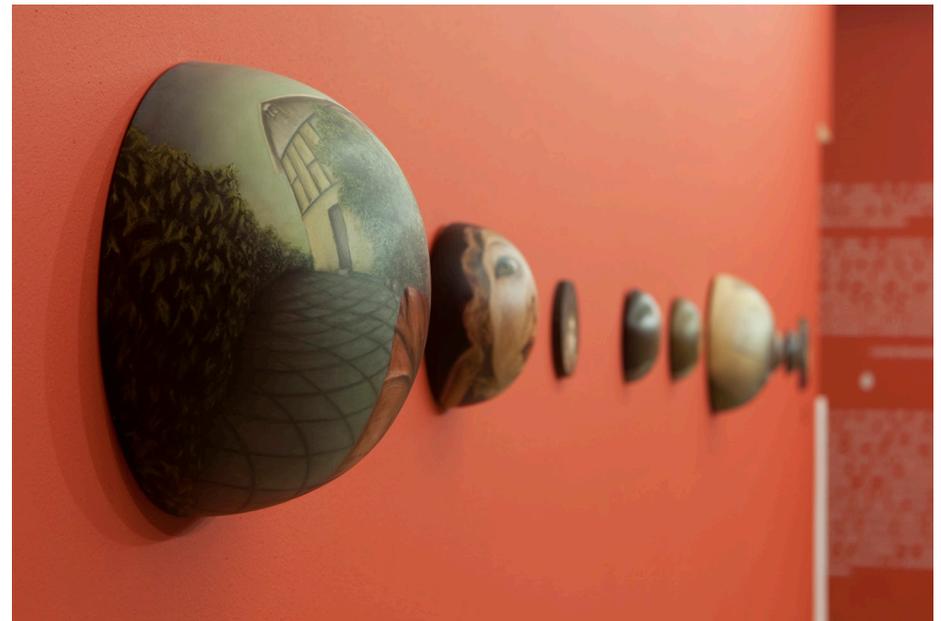
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1 *Iván*, oil on canvas (20cm diameter). 2 *Joaquín*, oil on canvas (25cm height and 20cm wide) Santiago, Chile, 2008

Each portrait functions as a particular piece in which every individual is represented by their physical appearance as well as by the use of other traditional strategies of the genre: the exaggeration of dominant features and the appearance of objects, colors and shapes reflecting the history, profession, personality

and other attributes of the respective model. These paintings explore and quote the colonial painting tradition that is characterized by importing European styles and techniques and adapting them to the local conditions. This process inevitably has symbolic and visual implications, both voluntary and involuntary.

On one hand the local artist does not have enough technical expertise and on the other, the painting model does not correspond geographically, culturally, or ethnically with the artistic referent. These interbreeding procedures take part in my painting as plastic deformations and conceptual crossroads.



Series: Retratos*, oil on convex wood, (25cm diameter and 18cm thickness). Detail of the series at the exhibition *Cochinilla

This portrait series is painted over convex supports inspired by the convex mirrors of Flemish Tradition (Jan Van Eyck, Petrus Christus, Quentin Metsys). The image deformation is the main issue to explore in this works and therefore models are conspicuously distorted.



Series: Retratos, oil on convex wood, (17cm diameter and 5cm thickness), Santiago, Chile, 2009.



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Sequence Carolina, oil on canvas, (16 pieces of 9cm x 7cm each), Visual Art Museum MAVI, Santiago, Chile, 2008.

This series depicts the same person in 16 different ways, starting with a close-up of a face, then zooming out to a general frame that represents “Carolina” in full body. Each frame captures a different pose, some of which are direct quotations from the history

of portraits, such as Renaissance profile and full-length frame, reserved for royalty during the Baroque and Neoclassicism periods. Also, the series has a sequential structure taken from the language of cinema: the “zoom out”.



Sequence Carolina details



La Diabla Encomienda, in collaboration with Diego Lorenzini. Stop motion animation (work in progress), 2010.

This video is about a musketeer Archangel that tells his own story. As in South American colonial paintings, the narration is expressed by the landscape which reflects the character's emotional states. The video is a contemporary

interpretation of a type of religious painting very important in the development of South American Art.



***The Slave*, Stop motion animation, in collaboration with Cristóbal León, 2008, Chile and Germany**

This piece was produced under a particular condition because the artists were in very distant places at the time of execution, so we decided to create a production strategy in a way we could take advantage of this situation. The procedure consisted of working as a

diptych with two characters. Each artist had to develop a video of one of the characters occupying the middle of the screen, without knowing what the other one did. We defined two guidelines; first we chose a diptych of Piero della Francesca, as a visual

structure, identifying both frame and position of the characters. Secondly, we took an audio segment of a film that consisted of a dialogue between two characters, this audio would order and synchronize the times of the video.

site-specific projects



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***Our own other: An Archive for the Future*, artistic research, 2011, Tropen Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.**

Collaborative project made from March till June, 2011, with the visitors of this ethnographic museum. It is an exploration of the relationships between image and identity, especially focusing on the representation of others at the

Tropen Museum. Being so, portraiture was an essential subject and tool of the research. The participants portrayed themselves and other people using video, photography, and drawing. With their help roles such as model, spectator and

author were playfully studied, resulting in spontaneous and performative representations of themselves and others. The participants were volunteers of various nationalities, age, occupation, physical and mental conditions. They

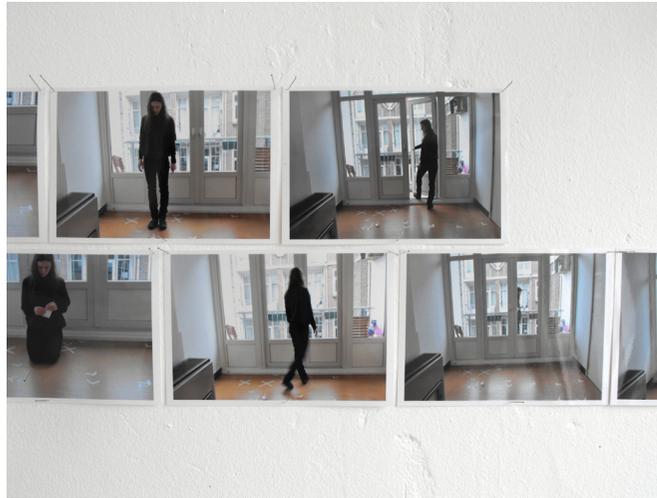


Our own other: An Archive for the Future (continued from previous page)

were invited to do three activities: make images of themselves as visitors; represent the cultures exhibited at the museum; and the last one was to classify the people in the museum. In the first one the participants made

videos and photos of themselves in the role of museum visitors (images 9 and 10). The second one also consisted in the collaborators making videos and photos of themselves, but this time reenacting the others, the people

represented by the museum (Arabs, Indians, Latin Americans, etc) (images 6 to 8). For the last one each participant was asked to classify the people they have seen at the museum represent them in drawing (images 1 to 5).



Confinement Room: a story about following instructions, photographic installation, 2011, Guest Room project Space, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

This series of (15x21cm) photographs narrates the story of a locked person and his/her abductors. In the course of two weeks residency program, the artist developed an strategy to produce the work without being physically there. Random people were invited to participate in the project

by following detailed instructions left by the artist. The result was a site-specific installation where the pictures represented the same space where they were exhibited. This project explores the possibilities of building up a story out of heterogeneous fragments of information. The main quest

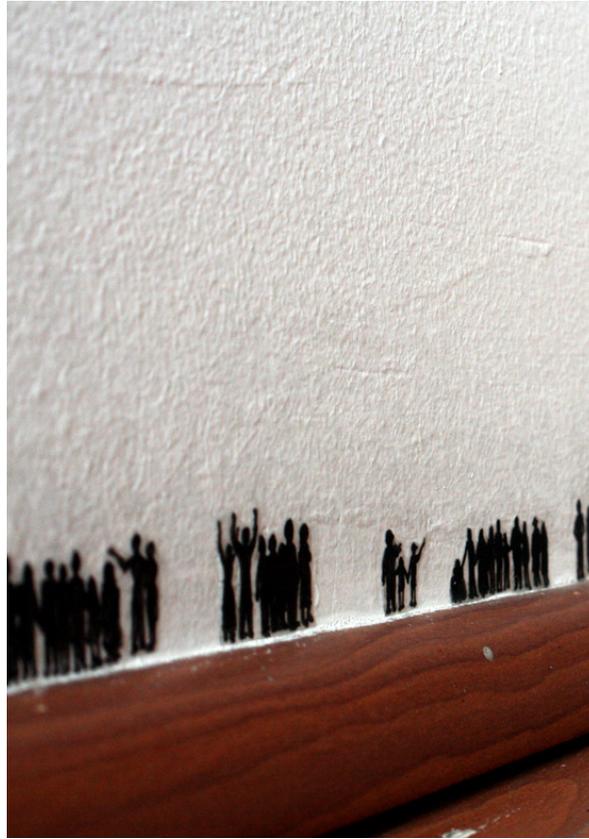
was conducted on the roles play by the space and the actors in a visual narrative. Finally, the physical features of the space became characters in their own right, structuring the action and gluing the scenes of the fiction.



El infierno no termina aquí, wall painting, 2008, Exhibition “Mitos Contemporáneos,” Santiago Library, Chile.

This mural was made on two facing walls. On one of them there was a painting of a huge fire coming from a heater, while the other showed tiny silhouettes of people, planes and helicopters. The painting was opened to multiple interpretations, at first

glance the work seems to depict a heater burning in fire, however, on a second look, the heater represented a building on fire being watched by hundreds of people from the front.



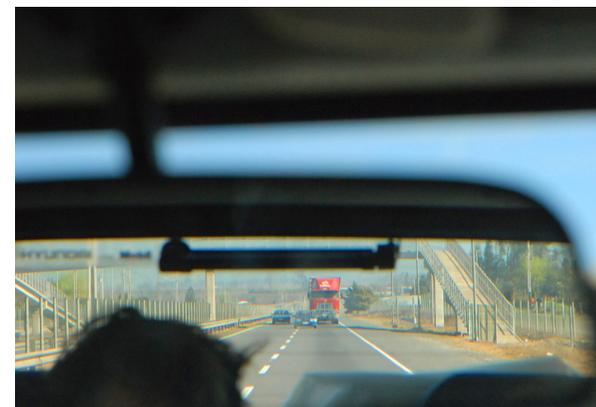
El infierno no termina aquí, details.



Agua Corriente, audiovisual installation, (in collaboration with Doris Viejo), 2007, Galería Metropolitana Art Gallery, Santiago, Chile.

The installation entails of an audio and a large size photography, which documented a performance made by students and employees of INFOCAP (Workers University). The participants assembled a chain of people who

passed water to each other, creating a closed circuit. This action refers to the social function of INFOCAP in Chile, which is the transfer of knowledge and experience from a person to another.



De Paseo, art project and video-documentary about the journey of an image on a truck's side, (in collaboration with Doris Viejo), 2006-2007, Chile and Argentina.

The project consisted of the traveling of a cemetery image through southern Chile and Argentina. The idea was carried out by attaching a giant picture to the side of a truck. Along the way, the image took us

through all kinds of landscapes, experiences and reflections, which were recorded and compressed in the video "De Paseo".