

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ

VALENTINA ALVARADO MATOS & CARLOS VÁSQUEZ MÉNDEZ

el otro aquí (the other here)

14.02 – 21.04.2024

I read in an interview, specifically in *Lumière* magazine, that Valentina Alvarado Matos (Maracaibo, 1986) and Carlos Vásquez Méndez (Santiago de Chile, 1975) set up a kind of 'nameless collective' in 2017. In the interview, it appears written like this, in inverted commas. I like this gesture and truly understand what they mean. Since then, both artists, both filmmakers, have worked individually and jointly to develop a body of work versed in the filmic image according to two shared interests. On the one hand, cinematographic self-referentiality; in other words, a cinema that speaks to us about cinema per se. And on the other hand, an emotional, sensitive narrative that emerges through experience.

Their fascination with the technical and illusory essence of cinema has therefore led them to focus their attention on issues such as the luminous existence of the moving image, its perceptual effects on our retina, or even to understand its artifice – celluloid, projector, screen – under an objectual and sculptural understanding that tightens the bonds between cinema and the visual arts, between the screening room and the exhibition space.

Valentina Alvarado Matos and Carlos Vásquez Méndez also share a poetic narration produced through the fragmentation and dialogue between disparate images, in which an affective, telluric belonging to specific places and moments underlines another experience shared by both of

them: migratory transit and its effects on life. I am referring to everything that involves arriving in a new place, longing for the place of origin, feeling the correspondences between the two, identifying proximities and distances, absences and presences...

el otro aquí is an exhibition about the filmic image; a film expanded by La Capella's space that voluntarily blurs the linear sequence of film in favour of an unguided physical journey. In other words, we no longer sit for something to happen before our eyes, but rather move around as that something is simultaneously happening, without the chance of accessing its totality. The exhibition therefore questions us from this notion of transit; something that by default implies being in one place and not in another, thereby incorporating a narrative that affects archive, memory and personal recollection, although without focusing on particular circumstances. Instead, their work explores the empathic capacity of images, their universal subjective power.

It could be said that the entire installation acts as a filmic machine with a highly evocative capacity. Firstly, because it manifests itself as a technical artefact, highlighting analogue (16 mm and slide) and digital projectors, or claiming the very structures that support them, in addition to the hanging screens scattered throughout the space. Secondly, because of the fleeting nature of



images, synthesised in specific moments of short duration – sometimes merely a few seconds, sometimes a few frames – but capable of fixing themselves in our minds through landscapes, details or gestures that are drawn or blurred according to an unconditioned capacity for feeling.

Finally, cinema's essence also appears in two fundamental gestures within the installation: the presence of white – light halo, image without image, or simply the waiting, the expectation of image – and the soundtrack. And while white prevails as physical reality, creating even abstract proto-images prior to the filmic illusion, the mechanical sound of the projection systems accompanies us as we observe, as we move around the room; a repetitive, hypnotic sound that, far from being annoying, adds other rhythmic, almost choreographic dynamics to the film's becoming. It is only in one of the side chapels that a soundscape joins the machines from a corner as a secondary sound, opening up a small listening space where the image apparently does not enter.

Without documentary pretensions, without a fictional pact, or simply leaving it to the images themselves to configure a possible narrative, *el otro aquí* exhibits a living, performative archive in which footage by both artists coexists, now converted into recorded images, into flashes that intensify a series of layers that similarly transit. *el otro aquí* is effortlessly both introspection and activism through images.

And in this continuous becoming, the filmic practice of Valentina Alvarado Matos and Carlos Vásquez Méndez rehearses a last unexpected expansion, one that actually transcends La Capella's own exhibition space. In late March, as a continuation and reverse side of *el otro aquí*, both artists are presenting an exhibition displacement on the ground floor of La Virreina Centre de la Imatge. La Capella and La Virreina are therefore exploring a system of working and collaborating together that creates a major contextual relay through three complementary moments centred on analysing the cinematographic image. The first occurs only at La Capella, the second creates an on-site

dialogue between the two institutions, and the third – as a possible response to what has happened – culminates at La Virreina.

David Armengol
Artistic Director of La Capella