

# *Unstable Geographies*

## *by Sofia Donovan*

The first encounter with what would later be the territory of Chile was not made from the deserts of the north, but from the islands of the south, even though this was an accidental view without position or a definite possession.

The experience of the gradual dismemberment of the coast also coincided, with the first sighting by a Western dweller of an inhabitant from beyond the new ocean on the other side of the Strait. Pigafetta recorded this event in 1520, a year after the arrival of Cortes to Tenochtitlan and sixteen years before Almagro entered the valley of the Mapocho. When they thought they had reached the end of the world, the Magellan crew then came across, "a man of giant stature who was almost naked on the beach, singing and dancing and throwing sand over his head."

Geography and imagination are here together and they both support and lend power to that legendary first trip to Chile from Argentina. No matter that this is now done in a straight line from east to west, without having to circumnavigate the continent, but rather across the mountains or flying over them; the journey is the same, from the solid plane of the South American mainland to the unstable strips of land far down south in the Pacific Ocean. Surrounded by the the four barriers of desert, land, water and ice- Chile is itself an island with no control over the horror of the elements, the battle with the Trentren and caicai vilú- , a temporary beach dismembered inside and outside that celebrates a world football tournament and smiles at the TV after the largest geological cataclysm that have ever been recorded in the history of planetary seismography.

If it is true, as Adorno, (a philosopher) thought, it shows that art has a social content that is sedimented within it, (although contemporary art is an established social norm) it is paradoxically closed to society and the artist itself that integrates it, we could bet perhaps, although there are a thousand other possible bets , that the collages and painted wood puzzles that Sofia Donovan describes for her artistic work, are the literal reconstructions of the ancestral journey culminating in the breakup of the deserted islands.

Gilles Deleuze restored for contemporary philosophers the distinction between the geography of two types of islands. On the one hand continental accidentally formed islands which are separated from a continent, born of their dislocation and on the other hand oceanic islands, islands which sprout from amid the desert aqueous and organic accumulations of porous coral or projections of underwater eruptions. In both cases, says Deleuze, what is at stake is a profound contrast between water and land.

Some remind us that the sea is on the earth, others that the land is still under the sea; which it is why the deserted islands are philosophically normal: you cannot live there with any security, unless one decides to dominate the on-going struggle with the elements. "The momentum of the man which brings him to the islands takes up the double movement that produces islands in themselves. Dream islands, with distress or happiness does not matter, it is the dreaming that one is already separated

from the continent, alone and lost -or- dreaming to be part again of nothing, which recreates, which restarts.

There were derived islands, but the island is also that toward which it is derived, and had islands originating, but the island is also the origin, radical and absolute origin. "It is no wonder then that Donovan's state allows the viewer to complete and recompose the exhibition of pieces as a fragment or as continuous. Both satisfy the fragmented and impossible homogeneity of the new room; the room of the house or apartment, but also the room of the territory that is migrated with their mismatches and gaps, the changing of friends and appropriate resources, the density of the missing to say good morning in the register of childhood the strangeness of the ways of those that are "other people" in the words of García Lorca, the uncertain semantic surplus between "you" and "sos", ie the way in which different countries (in this case Chile and Argentina) take the Spanish language and make it their own. Finally, it is the new space that takes the initiative, instead of Sofia, cutting and pasting colored wood on the wall, she perceives it throughout without hierarchy, but you should in turn seek to find the "allusive and fragmented proposal given in the previous series ."

Sofia Donovan clearly sees that just as in the system at the time there is the same crisp and enigmatic designs of *La mariée* (a piece of art by Duchamp) abstraction lives in the nostalgia of the figure and suddenly sees his elemental arrangements as anthropomorphic forms that trigger projections.

"They are abstract but are also something." And behold they incessantly return to the deserted island's geography. The artist, just like many famous characters before her, such as Jason or Ulysses, Prospero, Caliban, or even Pigafetta asks herself - a series of metaphysical questions. She questions how did the giants come to the Patagonian archipelago, where are they originally from? "The only answer is that man exists and there it is a rare type of being, a man separated absolutely, absolutely creator, in short, an ideal man, a prototype of a man who would be almost a god, a woman who would be nearly a goddess, a great Amnesiac, a pure artist, conscious of Earth and Ocean, a huge cyclone, a beautiful witch, a statue of Easter Island. Here is the man who precedes himself".

*Gabriel Castillo Fadic*  
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