

Diagnostic Imaging by *Sofía Donovan*

In her book, “Illness as Metaphor” Susan Sontag talks about illness as being like the nocturnal side of life, like an uncomfortable citizen: “every person when they are born has two citizens inside them, the kingdom of the healthy and the kingdom of the ill. Even though we prefer just to use our good passport, sooner or later each one of us is obliged, at least for a time, to identify ourselves with the citizen from the other side.

Sontag looks at the two illnesses, which from her point of view are the most powerful and all consuming, and fit in best with her metaphor – tuberculosis and cancer. The two illnesses are very different in their pathology. Sontag looks at the popular belief that tuberculosis is an illness that stems from passion, whereas cancer tends to affect people, who are emotionally contained.

Even though Sofia Donovan doesn’t concentrate on specific diseases, “Diagnostic Imaging” does introduce viewers to the topic of sickness and health. Works are produced which are born out of x-rays, taken of the artist, with a particular intensity relating to the body and its metaphors.

This new project emerges from the artist’s experience in a hospital, x-ray room, when she was waiting for the results of a scan on her head and stomach. The results of these brain and stomach scans were so powerful that suddenly the scientific method seems less important than the visual field, which was emphasized through the images. The shapes and forms that emerged from the radiographs led the artist to focus just on “looking” at what the scanner included. Then came the thought process and the production of the works. As can be seen in this exhibition, the artists worked on pictures of radiographs in semi abstract and three dimensional forms.

Specifically , Sofia Donovan mimics what was a light box for observing x-rays. The aluminum container is in reality a wooden base that resembles a metallic structure. Wood is used to imitate the contours shown in the x-rays. The inside of the wooden box is hollow and the artists uses this space to shape fragments of photographs of the body.

Sofia Donovan also uses fiber glass to create three-dimensional structures, which are neither paintings nor sculptures, but structures that evoke an intermediate stage . Using selection and abstraction processes of magnetic resonance images, the artist “ captures “ and “delivers “ an aesthetic dimension to the body and imagination. “ The material is meant to refer, first, to the coldness of the hospital climate and on the other hand to the viscosity of the body, but not his carnal expressiveness, but in a cold and mechanical way ,” says Donovan.

The intention to simulate cold and mechanical things is a way to give a psychological burden to the works, and in turn, to show the new plastic and conceptual interests of the artist. Distancing herself from previous works characterized by color, drawing and geometric and abstract motifs, this new look is about photo imaging that is to say - using photographs as the starting point of the work. It is the pigmentation of the body which gives the color and tone to work. Finally, the use of photos to record the body is understood as something that refers to a reality . It is not a metaphor for the body in general terms, but about the artist's distorted and fragmented body.

Highly personal, and grounded in the analysis of disease and health, these works systematically describe a map of physical , metaphysical and aesthetic spaces . Donovan understands her body, and in this work, acts as the patient facing a diagnosis, but also as the artist with aesthetic perception thereof. The speaker gives us an investigation into a new spatial projection that includes a series of pairs, sometimes opposite , sometimes concordant : an inside and an outside; a private aspect exposed in public; the link between sickness and health ; the possible relationship between aesthetics and science. A delirious, creative and intuitive ride on diagnostic imaging and health, where the hypothesis that arises is not intended to be scientific, but the visual shape of the artist herself.

Cecilia Brunson
Curator
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