

Françoise Vanneraud. Making landscape. Inhabiting the drawing. Transiting spaces.

Juan Francisco Rueda

There are two subjects, above others, to which Françoise Vanneraud has devoted her work. One, of a thematic order, takes on a *leitmotif* quality: the landscape and its experimentation, which has and continues to be treated from different perspectives that show a constellation of new sensibilities and uses for this genre and, above all, a respect for that reality or magnitude. Thus, the landscape has approached, in each according occasion, analogous notions such as territory, nature, or *historic landscape* (history and microhistories therein included).

The other subject is of a formal order. Drawing is in Vanneraud's core discipline. Nevertheless, the French artist remains immersed in a tireless process of expanding the medium. In this way, she has exhibited this medium in dialogue with others (video, for example) and has carried it into the installation, the *environment* or *objectification* (three-dimensionality of sculpture). In fact, we should note how she has consistently exercised the *expanded drawing*; that is, she has used every resource and material that allows her to draw (to graphically describe something), as, for example, simulating the outline of the mountains or a graph or diagram by cutting the edges of wood, books or glass.

Proof of this can be found in the new exhibition, *Insights of passage*, in which Vanneraud delves further into some aspects such as transit, the voyage, the road, the planned journey, and the *construction* of the landscape by way of experimentation and in connection with it, consequently introducing an important phenomenological-perceptual hue. Foreseen and tangential matters just before the journey or migratory movements, are dear to her previous works. Perhaps for this reason, some of the works shown now possess a certain tension, possibly a full-blown conflict between the two-dimensional and abstract representation of the landscape and the conception of it as territory, as space. It occurs in works such as *The World Is a Sculpture*, in which a mountainous drawing, by the turning of a screw and the necessary force used to secure it to the center of its support, as if it were a metaphorical movement of tectonic plates, makes the paper, the two-dimensional and illusionist representation of the mountainous landscape, acquire volume and become three-dimensional. Due to this pressure—it appears that, in twisting, the artist recreates the *internal forces* of the Earth—the drawing transforms into sculpture; as much as the image, which was nothing more than a succession of mountains that generated an illusion of depth, gains that *physicality* and that true sense of space as the two-dimensional (height and width) is added with the third dimension, depth: one that allows our view to *travel* or *transit* through that succession of ridged accidents.

Specifically, *Trilogie* urges to introduce the view through a hole that leads to a landscape, or that takes us directly to another cavity or hollow. There is always a displacement, an invitation to ponder, to wander, to travel, to *transport* us, to take us to another place. In short, to discover. Some of the drawings in *Trilogie* literally place us at the edge of the abyss and convey a sense of rush. Something similar happens with the drawings of hidden cliffs in part by an aluminum foil. The view is forced to sneak around the place, where almost a slit in the sheet is partially detached, making us lean into the void. The discovery of the landscape and a certain *scopic* sense (a direct allusion to the participation of sight, the pointing to the white of gazing and the channeling the gaze through cracks and spaces as openings or cavities) characterize these drawings and, in part, a number of works in *Insights of passage*. That gaze is also strained by the landscapes created with crystals. The material, which acquires a mountainous form through

several layers, thanks to its translucent nature, is permeable to our vision, turning the landscape transparent to our eyes.

The floor tiles in *Crossing*, intervened with drawings of curved levels indicating topography made by a recovered ancient device used by the French artist, allows us to bring ourselves literally into the landscape, more precisely, into the territory, and into the graphical and abstract representation. Representation that is two-dimensional and that after living, after transiting, becomes a different landscape since our experience entails that the ground will finally be broken by creating a new topography, very different from the previous one. Although Vanneraud's work has not leaned directly into ecology and yes more to the human experience in the landscape, to how it can be connoted by our presence as a historical stage and that condenses episodes or events, it is likely to surface the notion of human beings as the main agent of change. When painters needed the representation of landscape to originate in the viewer purely phenomenological or physical sensations, as the Romantic painters who were eager to convey the sublime, it did, in many cases, require the inclusion of the human figure in the natural setting. This resource was acting as a kind of projection of the beholder, passing to be inserted into the space represented, and therefore, was a kind of parallax that helped to alert the proper perspective and scale pictured. In other words, it allowed the beholder to be transported. While in a series like *Geography of Hope*, Vanneraud introduces the figure of exile in natural environments likely to be considered sublime, she now seems to urge the viewer to experience the landscape decidedly adding the sense of time—the idea of *passage* that the title yields—and accentuating perception by the sensorial. Perhaps the same feeling or spirit of fragility and change that underlies *Travesía* permeate *Paysage brisé*, a landscape fragmented in many pieces and reassembled on the wall. The articulation of the image, which emerges from the sum of the fragments, seems to allude dramatically to a cataclysm or apocalyptic metaphor.

In *Terre de départ*, a white line, whose itinerary spans numerous pictures of landscapes that occur in many mediums and that build a sort of column that eventually narrows and loses its sharpness as it moves away from us. That path, which is followed—as cannot be otherwise—by our gaze, traverses through several landscapes, all of them, as Vanneraud so tends, is marked by solitude, the insipid, or wilderness. Each image that follows the one before helps to build the road, constructed by walking and being surveyed by sight. Once again, Vanneraud, tries to convey the sense of space, although this time she relies on the temporal: the time in tracking the line, by sight, leading to some unknown destination is the time we take to walk through the landscape. *Terre de départ*, in addition to staging a certain proximity to some fundamentals of Land Art, such as the road—a closeness we also intuit in boulders on wheels—link to the theme of migration, which has been so central in her recent work. The title actually refers to the idea of travel or migration within a setting that becomes extremely hostile. Vanneraud wishes to associate the landscape with questions of geopolitics, as well as the scenario lived and experienced by human beings according to their circumstances. Often the landscape turns into place, into landscape singularized for its *historical setting* character. In the group of drawings that comprise *Spiaggia dei conigli (Lampedusa)* and represent the beach of Lampedusa, tousled by the air blown from a fan, the landscape is triggered in myriad possibilities of meaning. Given its geopolitical nature as a frontier space and as Andalusian coast, Lampedusa is the South of the North, or—never more appropriately said—the North of the South. It is, ultimately, a border area, a condition that has in other instances been explored by the artist. A land longed for reaching, the inherently paradisaic beaches of the Italian island become a metaphorical Paradise for he or she who braves the waters of the Mediterranean, which is the same as he or she who dares death. Scenarios such as this suppose a destiny, an end to the road, the transit, wandering, nomadism or displacement, circumstances that shape the lives of human beings.