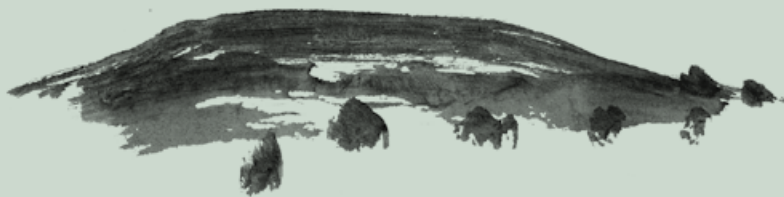
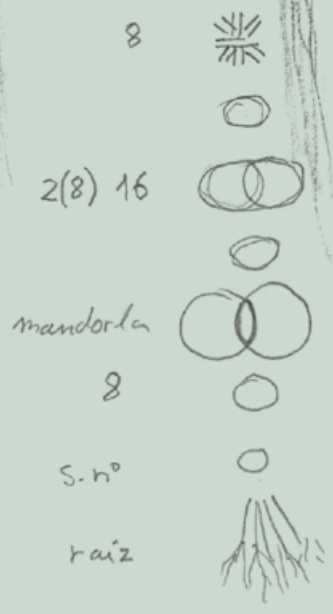
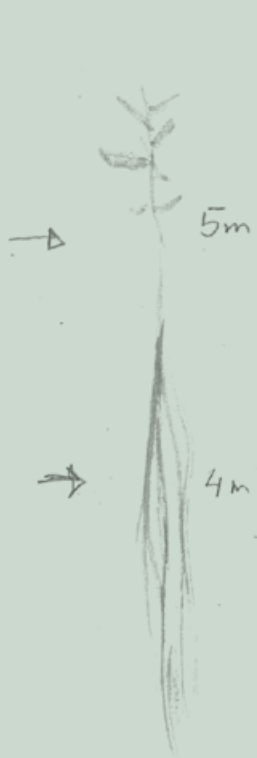


JULIÁN VALLE



El tejido del mundo

[The fabric of the world]



The truth does not “inhabit” only the “inner man”, or rather:
there is no inner man, man is in the world, and it is in the
world where man knows himself.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty¹

El tejido del mundo [The fabric of the world]

The project takes its name from the *tissu du monde* de Merleau-Ponty, a *fabric of the world* in which our body *is attached*, having “things in a circle around itself”.² A body, he reminds us, that it is both seeing and visible. And in ourselves, at this junction, “from the moment in which this strange system of exchanges is given, all the problems of painting are given”.³ Cézanne says: “nature is inside”;⁴ it is the mysterious certainty that “quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are only there because they awaken an echo in our body, because it welcomes them”.⁵ And “the eye is what has been moved by a certain impact of the world and restores it to the visible through the strokes of the hand”.⁶

I have always believed, I have experienced, that in the process of making a work of art it is essential to be aware that the hand is more than an instrument: for Henri Focillon “it is first of all an organ of knowledge”.⁷ The hand is the what guides us in this *knowing* — we will return to this later — which is also *recognizing oneself* in the recreated landscape. We recognize ourselves in that *fabric of the world* in which — as Merleau-Ponty told us — our body, our being, is *attached*. We feel the resonance of the words of William Blake: “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age”.⁸

Immersing yourself

In the practice of art, in the practice of painting, and more so in this experience of the landscape, it is necessary to immerse yourself in what is represented: to bury oneself until becoming one with it. It is not just a purely visual question, it is an experience beyond the visible: keep in mind that all the senses come into play in this experience. For works of art —which are first of all objects of contemplation— contain abyssal *repositories* of other experiences. It could also be said that —art— is a kind of *distillation of essences*. Little by little we understand what the painter Kugua Heshang [Bitter Gourd Monk] meant in his *Words about painting*. Shitao says in *The Landscape*, Chapter VIII: “Fifty years ago, the co-birth of my Self with Mountains and Rivers had not yet occurred, not because they were negligible values, but because I only let them exist by themselves. But now the Mountains and the Rivers have charged me with speaking for them; they were born in me and I in them”.⁹

Shitao, in order to approach this experience —chapter IV, *Veneration of receptivity*— which requires an attentive and humble contemplation of the world, tells us that *true* “receptivity is what precedes and knowledge what follows.”¹⁰ That is, that the painter, first of all, is a *seer*. His *interior* —we remember Cézanne — is a *receptacle*. This could be something typical of anyone who practices art as a way of knowing things: the need to be *concave*.¹¹ To be a *receptacle of the visible*.

Merleau-Ponty says in his little book dedicated to Cézanne —it could be from the *Discourse* of Shitao— something that many artists, and especially painters, know from experience: “*conception* cannot be prior to *execution*. Before its expression, there is nothing but a confused fever, and only the work, carried out and understood, will show that *something* instead of *nothing* could be found there.”¹² The poet José Ángel Valente can add something as well, in this case also applicable to painting, that “the poem is not written, it is illuminated.”¹³ And painters know of that *blindness* that is in us; of that groping path with a brush or a charcoal stick: an uncertain path is the one that leads from the first mark to the illumination of the work ... which had been at rest in its abyss of light.

Itinerary

This project named as *The fabric of the world* could be defined as an itinerary through certain places. Now I contemplate what has been the product of this trip, objects and drawings. All this has been gathered in three chapters-rooms linked by bridges. There does not seem to be a hierarchy, and each of the parts seems dependent on the rest. More than a narrative, it could be like the —cyclical— flow of the path itself.

We will find or discover the *presence of absence* in this itinerary, as it is and will be in this vast *fabric of the world* that we all inhabit. We will find or discover what is left there, in that place, tomb, temple, seed ... bowl. We will find or discover what remained or will remain in other memories, in that space that was previously inhabited — a space that is also a receptacle, that shows itself as an *empty cup*,¹⁴ as a chalice of rain.

Interior spaces

I have drawn these “containers” that are also buildings cut into the rock, carved paths and containers, or necropolis. I have modeled objects that seem to be part, or take aspects of these places, and others that miniaturize them or recreate them. For years I have frequented these spaces of rock hermitism that are the origin of this project. I was attracted by their material poverty, our ignorance of their specific uses, and the marks of their carving which are like grouped signs, like a petrified mantra. They drilled through the rock to create those *interior spaces* that now appear to us empty, *bare* of all ornament, in a cozy gloom, in the *solitude filled with the sound* of our own footsteps. They have a different *visibility* to that found in the largest and most complex buildings: those magnificent cathedrals with exquisite filigree that seem to have descended directly from the very sky to us mortals. Different is this other visibility that humbly seems to offer itself to the touch, to the human.

I was attracted to that roughness, that symbolic power. And I was especially attracted to their being constructions of which hardly any memory remains. What is memory? Memory in the dark, inside the rock, in the heat of the earth. And that light that carves the shadows from the entrance. That which seems to speak to us¹⁵ from the hole, stony gloom, the marrow that we call the *soul of things*. It speaks of the dissolution and of the memory that we see transform, flow or disappear.

Concave memory

It is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of these constructions —they were possibly developed between the sixth and eleventh centuries—¹⁶ since there are no architectural motifs, or they are typically of a very extensive temporal arc. They are sparing in useful details to date them: the archaeological remains that could be found in their environment are usually scarce.

The trace of many of these places in the toponymy is revealing — that memory of the place that remains floating on the contour lines of cartography, like the remains of a shipwreck. Any reference in written sources may have disappeared yet, nevertheless, it still remains in the memory of the people who inhabit these lands.

We know little about rock architecture,¹⁷ its uses or its inhabitants, which is logical given they come from isolated people and groups, isolated in their particular deserts. It was an extreme way of living spirituality, of escaping from the world: those who do not intend to leave a trace leave few traces. The medievalist Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel tells us: “*A man who withdraws from society hardly leaves his mark on history*”.¹⁸ Lao Tzu could add that “walking well leaves no trace behind it”¹⁹

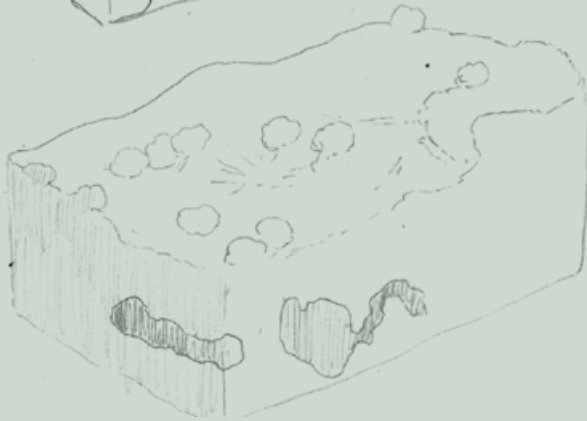
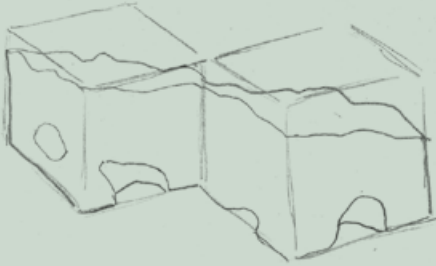
Notes

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenología de la percepción* [Phenomenology of Perception], Península, Barcelona, 1994, p.11.
2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *El ojo y el espíritu* [The eye and the Spirit], Trotta, Madrid, 2017, p.23.
3. Ibid. p.24.
4. Id.
5. Id.
6. Ibid. p.26.
7. For Focillon the artist presents himself with two faces: the most evolved man coexists with the prehistoric who still maintains the magical feeling of the unknown, “but, above all, the poetics and the technique of the hand” (Henri Focillon, *La vida de las formas y Elogio de la mano*. [The life of forms and Praise of the hand], Xarait Ediciones, Madrid, 1983, p.76).
8. William Blake, *El matrimonio del cielo y el infierno. Los cantos de Inocencia. Los cantos de Experiencia*, [The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Songs of Innocence and Experience. Visor, Madrid, 1983, p.33.
9. Shitao, *Palabras sobre la pintura* [Words about painting], Universidad de Granada, Granada, 2012, p.91.
10. Ibid. p.65.
11. When speaking of the concave, it is inevitable that the words of Ramón Gaya will return to us. That “great art” —he says— that is nothing but a concave existence (Ramón Gaya, “El sentimiento de la pintura”, en *Obra completa, Tomo I*, Pre-textos[“The feeling of painting”, in Complete Works, Volume I, Pre-texts]. Valencia, 1999, p. 59).
12. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La duda de Cézanne* [Cézanne’s Doubt], Casimiro, Madrid, 2018, pp 49 y 50.
13. José Ángel Valente, “Cómo se pinta un dragón” [“How a dragon is painted”], en *Obra poética 2, Material memoria (1977-1992)* [Poetic work 2, Memory material (1977-1992)], p. 11.
14. Lao Tzu says: “The Tao is like an empty cup that, when used, can never be filled. Unfathomable, it seems to be the origin of all things” (Lao Tse, *Tao Te King*, Círculo de Lectores, Barcelona, 2008, p.19).
15. Towards the interior it is not the sight, it is the hearing, that is the meaning of the night. Bachelard says that it is in the mouth of the cave where “the imagination of deep voices works, the imagination of underground voices. All caves speak”, he concludes. (Gaston Bachelard, *La tierra y las ensueñas del reposo. Ensayo sobre las imágenes de la intimidad* [The land and the reveries of rest. Essay on the images of intimacy], Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, D.F., 2008, p. 216).
16. A very broad chronological framework (J.I. Padilla and K.A. Rueda, “Asentamientos medievales y otras manifestaciones rupestres del Alto Arlanza” [“Medieval settlements and other rock manifestations of Alto Arlanza”], in Jorge López Quiroga and Artemio M. Martínez Tejera Ed., *In concavis petrarum habitaverunt. El fenómeno rupestre en el Mediterráneo Medieval* [They lived in the hollow of the rocks. The cave phenomenon in the Medieval Mediterranean], Archaeopress, Oxford, UK, 2014, pp. 229 and 230).
17. “We are still far from being able to guarantee the exact function of many caves traditionally considered hermitages” (Feo Moreno Martín, “Los escenarios arquitectónicos del eremitismo hispano. Límites para su estudio”, en *El monacato espontáneo. Eremitas y eremitorios en el mundo medieval*. [“The architectural settings of Hispanic hermitism. Limits for its study”, in Spontaneous monasticism. Hermitages and hermitages in the medieval world]. Foundation Sta M^a la Real. CER, Aguilar de Campoo, Palencia, 2011, p. 87).
18. Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel, El eremitismo en la Castilla primitiva, cited by L. A. Monreal Jimeno en *Eremitorios rupestres altomedievales. El alto valle del Ebro* [Hermitism in primitive Castile, cited by L. A. Monreal Jimeno in Early Medieval Rock Hermitages. The upper Ebro valley], University of Deusto, Bilbao, 1989, p.17.
19. Lao Tse, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Hay un desarrollo
en superficie y
otro subterráneo



Pliegues de relieve



CENTRO DE ARTE
CAJA DE BURGOS