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In this unparalleled frame...

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“Unparalleled frame” is a daily life topical expression, it assumes a commonplace which has been used by journalistic reporting or the trashy touristic reviews when they need to highlight something special, singular or distinct. And it usually refers to a landscape, a natural or cultural environment that will leave us overwhelmed when we visit it. In this project I present here, I try to talk from this unparalleled frame and - except from the intentional kink or final twist of the screw characteristic of artistic work- I don't do it, at the beginning, in a very different way from this idiom vulgar use; it is hard to scape from the mundane grandiloquence that we normally adopt. “Frame” – in general, and no matter its kind (labour, social, theoretical, legal, business) -, itself, results pompous and exclusive and, sometimes, sectarian.

On the other hand, we all know that a frame is an element which belongs to the tradition of painting. It is used as a dividing element between the content of the pictorial piece and its context. The frame tries to delineate art from reality; the ‘inside’ is the art (whatever we decide it is) and the ‘outside’ is the real (a similar or even harder decision). Thus, the frame is a transitive or bordering element which we can eventually remove when we understand that it is not essential. We could say that if necessary, it is a truism or redundancy to put a frame to something that is completely heterogeneous; for instance: the important difference between two different colour fields does not compulsory need any dividing element (the perception of the dissimilar does not requires any limit when it is as strong as it is the one which exists between an oasis spring water and the desert sand that surrounds it, or between a mirror and what surrounds it).

However, the use and choice of the frame, beyond its utility within painting, has been related with other type of connotations in other periods of time, those in which this old-age item defined the socio-economic context of what had to be reviewed as object of admiration – including its rightful owners, which were also signified by the possession of the “treasure” worthy of being framed. In a sense the frame, and in an opposite direction to what has been said above, provides to the “unreal” a context of connection with the real, and thus it proves to be meaningful to physically and aesthetically reinforce the artistic object and at the same time guarantee a class status. In addition, and for the same reason, in the past and still in some current contexts, a type of frame did not use to express, or does nor express, the same than the other; size, material, shape, thickness, finishing, even the artisan or manufacturer, etc. have always “meant” more than the functional boundary between two different areas, the real and the artistic, or in other less compromising words: the “distinguished” or the “special” on the background which represents reality (as if pieces of art had any real chance to scape from the category of “real”). But it is also well known, I am saying nothing new, that in art we have reached a certain connotative indifference regarding to the use of the frame, and specially, from the art producer, the author's point of view, and neither just not from other interests' perspective like the commercialisation and art consumption.

This exhibition speaks in passing about these subjects and some less obvious, but I have to advice that with regards to the former I am not trying to be exhaustive nor to do memorandums nor treatises on frames as element endlessly investigated in different ways in theory, history of art and aesthetic books (or in technical framing manuals, marquetry, embossing, inlay, etc.). Since I do not suffer from neither the *archive illness* nor the erudition or exegesis' ones, I neither propose a historicist revision nor mean to undertake a hermeneutic inspection of the frame. As an artist, and not as scholar, I merely aim to collect some artworks which has to do with the frame or its lack, with some of its most elemental functions and also with its less visible semantic or pragmatic meta-functions. Personally I am not comfortable in the realm of the taste or social distinction and, off the top of my head, I do not care, except for strictly technical reasons, that a piece of art has or not a frame. As it is not about stigmatizing no one and nothing, I just try to do a shallow

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review of some allocations that this bordering figure still preserve and can refer to diverse intentions that I am not willing to eviscerate to avoid the exsanguination of the works (a task which just fall to authorised rippers and well-armed with sharp dissection tools).

I particularly find more interesting the idea of separation; the offer of differentiation that this object well represents on our minds: "This and the other". Something Descartes thought of considered father of analytical geometry and the so-called modern philosophy, when he exposed the necessity of "clear and distinct" perceptions and ideas. The frame, and its different masks or incarnations, serves to avoid ambiguities, ambivalences, doubts; that is how we discard the uncertain- and we can underlie the world, put an end to hesitations: A or -A ('A' or 'not A'), leaving excluded the third, and to avoid falling into chaos or troubles that have brought the ambivalent or blurred logistics or other complexities. All these lead us to ascertain that the frame is optional, contingent, and not "necessary": to put a frame is a decision.

The frame is the taxon, classification and regulation's main tool, even of the foucaltian's episteme or kuhnian paradigm (those who talk the same professional jargon and, thus, share the same framework of understanding and discussion). We have not done anything else rather than taxonomies since the world was first "created": God is one thing and creation is another – unless the pantheist come to bother and confuse (the king is the king and the village is the village; rich people walk around here and the poor around there; the lords are the servant's owners and among them only one single direction commands are shared (some dictate and the rest obey), and the division between both of them is built on a frame of effective and symbolic violence. What matters is on one side and the vulgar on the other; and however much interactivity is proposed, and in spite of the goodwill, artists are framed on their "original" productive or proactive activity and spectators on their responsiveness (more or less active or passive); if it worked differently, artists would opt for not having any recognition of their work, something which, notwithstanding what people say, it seems quite unlikely.

But let's try to go even further. If we slightly extrapolate the concept and put it out of its artistic "senses", we will check that they are division/distinction frames (or their masks) what always do the dirty work: fences, passports, pits, skin colours, skills, wire fences, weapons, credit cards, security cameras, clothes, etc. And from all of them always arise cases that- as the own concept of frame- we naturally inherit (or we naturalize almost without realising about its importance or arbitrariness): we have been well trained and we are trustworthy when separating and distinguishing what must require attention and care against what can, or must, be marginalised, underestimated or even removed.

The frame is used to order, what eventually mean give orders. Hitler himself (and many other sociopaths who daily wander our lives or who even interfere in our unconscious) was bothered by these type of races, ethnics, sexual choices, etc., so choosing the pureness, why not using dividing compartments, concentration camps or exclusion areas and therefore finishing with the mess? The *Endlösung* (the 'Final solution', the extermination) was a huge frame, a mass grave of unreasonable proportions where throwing human waste. In any case, and although it is unavoidable to think of this association of ideas and mechanisms, I will not persist on this text, neither in the exhibition which suggests so, on that path full of paternalism and distribution of good and bad roles... Although all of this is also there, present on the intentions of the showed work, I am not considering the elaboration of a pamphlet full of opinions, and I will not illustrate with images the cruelties we usually commit; from my point of view, while without stop suffering from the most scandalous, there are much subtler types of violence than we would normally think of and which, inadvertently, hatch the snake's egg; to this task I devote part of my attention and exercise.

In this exhibition, as in any other, the locus, the exhibition space is already a frame, an aside (it even exists as something like the aside used in classic theatre when some characters talked as they were offstage addressing the audience to communicate their interests and affairs of which the actors onstage should not be aware of - those who were left out of the "aside"). Sometimes I think of a contemporary art gallery as the place were matters of this world that most of its inhabitants ignore will be discussed or forge; I would even bet that most of them do not access these venues because they do not feel the complicity of the own artistic space. It is also the case, although with different contents, in many other restricted public spaces

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(the political sphere, the economical, the religious, scholar, technical, etc.) which we will not delve into at the moment. In the case we are concern now, things are as follow: we can locate an inside and an outside the exhibition space as a first distinction area, as the phenomenological threshold in which a door, the gallery entrance, behaves as the customs office of the *In* and *Out*.

[.....] Within the exhibition entitled *EN ESTE MARCO INCOMPARABLE... (In this unparalleled frame)*, I propose some pieces that despite their formal and discursive diversity all of them have in common their relation with the frame or its concept, in an explicit or implicit way. Although various aspects of our lives are treated, and unevenly, the element of articulation of these differences, paradoxically, is the separation, something that is as shocking as common. (A bone articulation is a lack of bone, and precisely bones arte useful due to this lack; the same thing happens with the lack between words in a written text, which allow an efficient reading). In this case, the pieces are gathered here for the attention paid to what is separated or used to separate -either a frame, either from the rest of the world; either distinction of material or virtual layers, textures, environments, concepts or authorship. It is a show like any other in which is exhibited what it has been done, selected or conducted by the author and he itself thinks it deserves to be featured in a special way and to be exposed to other people. But maybe what is considered most relevant is what is linked with the separation or distinction elements; and this matter drives us to an explicit meta-artisticity and to an implicit violence, ambushed in the "kind selection" that corresponds with the fact of exhibit things that apparently have only relation with "art" or its world.

I could finish here with this superficial reflection about the in-out, the separation, distinction, etc., and thus I am decided to keep doing that but not before insisting on these points that I come across with when I speculate about what I do with *IN THIS UNPARALLELED FRAME...* These arguments are associated with the fact that when the time comes to seek throughout a frame a boundary, a fence, distinction or limit, what unavoidably and essentially is defined are spaces of power and submission. Some of them are clear, aggressive, unfair, unbearable, other are better or worse camouflaged, euphemistic, etc.; some at the mercy of external pressure, others as result of self-abuse, self-censorship, self-submission, self-esteem, etc., but all of them are probably joined by the same and shared fate of segmented and exclusionary view. In a certain way that I pretend to be smooth, even kind, I am talking about violence and acting through it, executing it.

This exhibition shows five examples related to these reality of power which, still presenting some degree of auto-referential artistic nature, can be exported to any sphere of our lives. **(1) THE AUTHOR IS LIKE A GHOST INSIDE THE FRAME** shows, in a self-parodic exercise, the "aristocracy" of authorship which is expressed as a shadow cloistered by its own finitude limits. A frame (although it is only metaphorical or conceptual) is a hideout where the artist engages in self-kidnapping (literally), restrict himself. From this position, he tries to get distinction – however much the relational farce is used or the spectator shadow interacting with the author is activated. Here it is offered the separation that involves the projection of a frame over a wall with the phantasmagorical author inside walking from one side to the other and interfered from "outside the frame" by the dark shapes of the audience while a metronome signals, frame, the passing of time. **(2) UNEXPECTED SELF-PORTRAIT** shares some of this self-limitation mentioned before; through it I re-entitle as "unexpected self-portrait" the work of some authors chosen because of diverse singularities which correspond with examples of a certain contemporary art canon; it is selection of thirty pictures of quite well-known works of famous artists who perform like self-portraits (for instance: the black square becomes Malévich self-portrait or Gertrude Stein is Picasso's self-portrait). Although a particular sense of humour or sarcasm (not present in all cases) can be stalking these type of works that manipulate pieces of art of others, it can be claimed that the authorship of each of the selected names by means of what they attain to produce, through the works which "express" them; that is how why may conclude that it is their portrait, their "real portrait" (in this case framed in golden frames digital simulations that connote in an extemporal way each work. **(3) POSTHUMOUS (Ars Postuma)** represents the glamour, exclusiveness and social success meant for stepping in the red carpet; the exchange is a mere transposition of that connoted carpet into the wall talks about the closer contents of art to marketing of fame and symbolic capitalism, a kind of "first the fame (or the handling of the context) and then the work". This work presents two rectangles trimmed from carpet and its translation from the floor to the wall, place were they get the

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“picture” format; a cynical exercise that exerts on the same banality of the material a kind of “authorship and artistic gain”. **(4) OLD FASHIONED** comments on the self-image and narcissism which – when the mirror projects our image that always, no matter we want or not, turn out to be outdated –, compulsively move us towards a tyrannical and surprising change of look which the “art system” does not scape from. This artwork returns the unnoticed image of reality that the mirror warns us, like in a vanitas, about *the tempus fugit* or *planned obsolescence* that also concerns the whole exhibition. Old-fashioned disrupts not only what we own but also solves what we are now and advices us on the mysterious forgetfulness of the future. **(5) RE-ACTION PAINTING (Shadow Art in the Museum)** is the example of a museum’s narration and a certain type of spatial display. The shadow of the frames is shown in a series of photographs “talented and daring museographic design” (a “sophisticated” way of doing that adds a paradoxical patina of timeliness with the aim of popularizing its contents and broaden its ‘audiences’). Through these series of pictures different colours, textures and finishing can be appreciated in which, as “re-active” paintings the shadows of the paintings are projected; and each series is complemented by a music stand with a video device on, a tablet, which from the “documentary” point of view and as a score approaches us to the unsuspected attention given to the real frames’ shadow projections against the lack of interest towards its “most important” contents (the museum’s own paintings).

In a sense, and as I previously announced, the five pieces of work are forms which hide perpetrated or legitimated violence from the very places of art creation or dissemination. [...] As a final summary, we could say that whenever we distinguish places in a “hard” way, we are expressing that accesses are limited, restricted, and are controlled by a territorial violence often signposted with the “naturalness” of the symbolic. If we want to access something out of our range it needed to cross demanding and arbitrary thresholds, but there are some possibility conditions for our options to come true and transform ourselves into an agent worthy of transiting that new and "wonderful" space of " distinction ". In this stage we could find these answers: What do I have to resign to in order to reach all that? What kind of violence do I suffer or have to self-inflict in order to have a place into so toxic space that requires this kind of dependence? or which kind of brain modelling, who knows if even more humiliating, have I to suffer to destroying my dignity, in order to enjoy the ovation of the chosen from this perverted and absurd world of fame, corruption, success and greed? Is it all this more important than my felling of independence, autonomy or emancipation?

Within the aside and theatricalized space of the gallery we could meditate about that before leaving and coming back to the real world, where everything shines or disappoints again in the same way that it did inside. In the outside we feel that the aside of the exhibition (in which, by the way, no frame has the conventional material conditions, I only manage its idea or image) is merely the reflection of the outside; the crippling exterminator Angel of Buñuel or does not exist further the film or lives in all of us when we accept the imposed rules and pay their tributes. Maybe, as much, when leaving the gallery, we could ask to ourselves: what does we leave in the inside or what does we take to the outside? It is possible that some kind of emancipation is generated from the polite violence that *this unparalleled frame exerts?*

Joaquín Ivars, August 2019