

The Treachery of Images by Andrés Duprat

Translated by Cayley Taylor
(Original Spanish version below)

The works of Leandro Erlich move between appearance and reality, highlighting that many times things are not what they may seem.

Familiarity is his starting point: a pool, an elevator, a hair salon, a winter garden, the facade of a house. We recognize their forms immediately and instantly associate them with their usual function. We are not accustomed to being betrayed by our visual perception.

In his works Erlich combines appearance and function in such a way that the encounter throws us into crisis and interpellates us. The created objects seem known, domestic or recognizable but in reality they are not; they belong to the world of art, and, as such, contain their own poetics and inherent practical uselessness. The pool is not for swimming, the mirrors in the hair salon don't reflect our image, and the elevator doesn't take us anywhere.

The influence of his works doesn't end when we stop looking at, analyzing and unraveling their tricks and mechanisms; this is precisely where it begins. They are transformed before our eyes into works of art and at that point unfold their multiple meaning and infinite derivations. Clearly, they do not seek to give answers, but instead, to pose questions.

The visual language that Erlich uses for his creations is both popular and intelligible, seeking to thereby express his ideas and concerns as effectively as possible without hiding them with secrecy and indecipherable signs. This practice reduces the gap between the general public and the production of contemporary art, creating a genuine and intense connection on various levels.

The particular distancing between the poetics of visual arts and popular taste motivated the emergence of diverse mediators (curators, critics and academics). Manifestations of contemporary art have become, in general, a territory 'only for a few.' Only an adequately prepared elite will possess the key to their profound meaning. This gap between artistic production and the spectator provoked the proliferation of theories, hypotheses and interpretations made by experts and scholars which, even while constituting a positive and fundamental contribution, strengthened a predominantly intellectual and rational approach above other forms of access based on more intuitive, random and emotional aspects.

Erlich's works offer a return to the experience, to approach the works in a direct, carefree and sensual way without many prologues or warnings, such as listening to a piece of music or watching a movie. It allows us to be carried away by what the work proposes and to live the experience. When watching a movie we aren't constantly

thinking about how it isn't real and that they are just actors interpreting roles that someone else has written. On the contrary, we try to immerse ourselves in that world and live it with intensity. Once the experience is over, our analysis will be activated and processed in our mind: references, meanings, connections, explanations, metaphors, thereby creating another moment of appreciation.

Erlich fosters a return to the "sensory experience". Proposing, in the first instance, to succumb to the sensorial nature of the appearance - which is the way in which we grasp the world - only to later throw into question our own reality decodification system.

As we contemplate his works we go through diverse perceptual stages: impression, estrangement, decoding and reflection. The artist captures our attention by reproducing an extraordinary *mise-en-scène*, utilizing any means necessary and resolving the piece in all its technical and expressive complexity to make us enter his fantasy.

But beware, Erlich isn't a magician who hides his tricks, but one who instead invites us to figure them out in order to move from an instance of play and spectacularity to another of silence and reflection. The decoding of the trick leads us to reflect on the construction of meaning and the concept of reality.

Port of Reflections

In this new work, Erlich presents us with a dock with various tied up boats. Just the mere idea of finding this scene inside a museum is disconcerting and disturbing. After the fascination resulting from its first impact, we begin the rational work of dismantling what we see. The installation gives the impression that time has stopped to allow us to meticulously, and from different points of view, go over every detail of the scene without anything changing or escaping us.

Starting with its title, the installation offers a play on ambiguities: "Port of Reflections", refers to both thinking and the physical phenomenon of reflection, just as how almost a century ago René Magritte presented his work called "The Treachery of Images" by painting a pipe and writing underneath "This is not a pipe." Today Erlich presents us with a dock installed in the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Seoul, telling us, "beware, this is not a dock."