

O. has been waiting next to a window. O. usually does not stop too long during the time O spends at the office, but now O has been waiting, waiting standing next to a window on the fifth floor. The day started out rainy, leaden grey, dense, grey but now it's beginning to brighten up. To brighten up, albeit in a strange way, in any case, the twirls of orange and pink sky appearing from behind the clouds are strange and fascinating. The rain stopped a few minutes ago. There is no rain but there are drops. In everything that O. can see from the window of the fifth floor, there are drops, drops on all surfaces, trembling and sliding tremorously towards other drops to form larger, even shakier drops. Everything that O. can see from the fifth floor has a kind of vibration and O. is watching it without moving. O. looks out the window and doesn't move at all.

Life of O., script fragment. Lúa Coderch, 2018

Everyone feels like a hallway
at some point or another.
But you are a room
that people enter to stay.
— Kaitlyn Boulding

There's a chair in the centre of the space. It's an antique chair, made in Germany during the first half of the 20th century. Once it was nothing more than an old chair, but one of the many effects of time is that it turns indifference into consideration and even into fascination. Beside the chair is a publication that is almost but not quite a book. It's not a notebook, nor is it a brochure or a leaflet. It's a booklet, which is a category that shows how diminutives are capable of underestimating whatever it is they refer to. It's also an opuscle, a term endowed with solemn dignity that only words that have fallen into disuse can possess. As is the case with objects, the past can lend value to language. The text that the opuscle contains is an opening speech by the chair to human beings that works the other way around. This time it is a subordinate who addresses itself, with a certain degree of arrogance, to its superiors. It is a chair that is talking. It has no voice, nor does it have a mouth. Yet it does possess the faculty of language, which is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings applied to inert matter and to things. All the same, the fact that this chair is talking is a speculative exercise with a catch to it. The text in the first person has been written by a human being and not by an object¹.

What if things could talk? What would they say to us? Or perhaps they're already talking and we can't hear them? And who's going to translate what they say? But why would things want to talk to us or have us translate what they have to say? The lending of attributes as a sign of superiority, generosity as a form of low-intensity power, largesse as a sign of belonging. Giving what one has to something that doesn't ask for it that is; giving the gift of language to entities that can live perfectly well without it. Interpretation can be a form of authority; translation can be a privilege of those who can speak on behalf of others. The bestowal of what is one's own, is a way of reminding someone else about what they do not have. This is a philanthropic way of underlining their shortcomings. The dumb passivity of the object can be understood as an absent life. It does not think; therefore it does not exist that is- to ignore the fact that the capacity for action of things lies somewhere else beyond language. At the same time, there is the arrogance of believing that speech is a faculty that belongs only

to human and also that any act of enunciation of significant presence, must inevitably involve language. Is there speech without language? Is it possible to give something that does not entirely belong to you to someone who doesn't ask for it? It is a something that you don't even consider as a someone, and, a priori, does not possess the attribute of interest and even less so that of supplication. It is something or someone, that is not asking you to speak on their behalf.

Ours is a world built on our needs. And yet, these can become so contradictory that we are in danger of them turning into a problem for us as a species. But is our world the same world as that of things? Is it really true that things belong to us? That they exist for us? It may be the other way around, that is things subtly appropriating us without our noticing. When you are given a watch, you are the gift, it's you they are offering to celebrate the watch's birthday. The same thing happens with a telephone, a computer, or a bicycle. It's your life that revolves around them and their needs. If you are riding a bicycle you are a unit in which the human is considerably reduced in relation to the object. Becoming a bicycle, becoming a machine, becoming a tool. This is an unforeseen preamble to technological singularity. The intelligence of the artificial is above and beyond alleged technological autonomy. The union between the human and the object appears through the complicity of a gesture and also from the silent exchange of attributes.

There are those who claim that we are a materialisation of the relationships between commodities and our lives are the social life of the object. Just as commodities lose their economic value immediately after you have paid for them, so do we also. We lose our value when we interact with each other as we do with objects that have been turned into pure commodity. We human beings buy one another. We throw ourselves into the rubbish bin. We break one another. We collect one another. We use one another. We are interchangeable, expendable, disposable. We turn into objects and when we imagine ourselves from this category and its multiple attributions, we retain the higher moral status of subjectivity over objectuality. What is wrong with objects? What has turned them into ethical artefacts that work by negation, as a symbol of what we should not or do not want to be? The problem does not lie with the object. In any case, it lies with our different ways of relating with otherness, whether human or non-human. It lies in the implicit submission of our perception and interpretation of things and of the world.

It's not easy to openly say that we have a problem, to recognise defects in ourselves and in others. The fact of openly demonstrating that we do not always match to what is expected of us could render us less attractive, less valid. Less marketable, less efficient. Like an appliance, it stops working and not only loses its supposed *raison d'être*, but also ceases to be an object and becomes just a thing. It is a piece of junk that occupies a space that it is no longer legitimised to occupy. Human hierarchies apply, even within the material environment. The value of certain objects and materials is greater than that of others. To be a diamond in the rough. To be a trophy. To be a decorative element. To be a piece of furniture. To be a piece of debris. To be rubbish. There is a complex difference between things and objects. The former is a material processes that unfolds over time. The latter is a specific position in the life of a thing. But just as all objects participate in the condition of things, we cannot say that all things are objects. What makes a thing an object? And what makes a person end up turning into a thing? Perhaps we should leave things in peace, let them rest somewhere inaccessible to us and our hermeneutic urge. We should stop suffocating them with language and stop subjecting them with our subjectivity.

To be a work of art is perhaps the most privileged object. It is able to turn care into a form of submission and dependence by both sides. It is also the loneliest object, the most hermetic, the most isolated. The one that is denied its status as a thing by denying the action that time has on matter.

The suspension of life happens through its extension ad infinitum. The future becomes an obligation and not a possible event. A ready-made object is an object that has been able to sacrifice the artist for its own benefit. It is a work of art that functions from the simulation, it does not need an artist to make it and that hides a secret we cannot decipher. It proves that any object is not just an inert body that occupies a space over time, rather a much larger system of values and interactions that alters the usual meaning of things, extending the understanding we have of them.

Subjectivity is understood from its condition of emancipatory practice. A subject is someone who has the capacity for action. They are endowed with a polysemic voice. The desire to be a subject is added to the need and the right to be just that in a world that reaffirms the human over all other things. Yet ours is a humanity that excludes, that does not recognise all the elements that it supposedly embraces, includes and represents. We have always lived in the splendour of the subject (of certain

subjects) and the poverty of the object (certain objects). To become a subject of history, of political representation. This is an objective that disregards the object. And yet, if we were to take a closer look, we'd realise that even commodities are historical subjects. Objects without our hands must also be the same, must also be comrades. Being a subject gives rise to many complications. Being a subject implies being subjected to multiple networks of power. Ironically, one of its effects is objectualisation. But what if we were to begin to positively assert the object that is inside of us? To begin to be a thing, something that feels without the oppression/ pressure of the subject. Cast off the inner trauma that subjectivity implies and yet, things also have wounds. They condense social forces. They condense power and violence. But they also condense moments of life. They are the material proof of the intra-history. Of those stories that remain hidden yet are at the same time entangled in the silences of the official narrative. Becoming an object as a way to become a conscious part of the relationships that are fossilised in things. Also as a way of recognising the diversity of bodies, although a certain similarity between them does not imply that they have to share what they can express or perceive. No matter how materially stable objects may seem to be, they are different things in different scenarios. As are we. Some people say the subject is born from the object but who does this phrase refer to? Is every human being covered by this statement? And every object? Perhaps so... perhaps things are talking among themselves about us, proving that it is also possible to talk about something without necessarily speaking on their behalf².

Sonia Fernández Pan

¹— The chair and the text to which I refer in this paragraph formed part of the introduction to the curatorial program *The more we know about them, the stranger they become* which took place in 2018 at the Centro Arts Santa Mònica in Barcelona, initiating the research that is now continued by *A mirror becomes a razor when it's broken*. The introduction to the first program was a speculative attempt to endow objects with agency through speech, an exercise brought into question by *Life of O*.

²— This text has been made possible thanks to the contributions, ideas and guidance of Jean Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin, Bill Brown, Julio Cortázar, Lúa Coderch, Fernando Domínguez Rubio, Raimundas Malašauskas, Ania Nowak, Anaïs Senli, Michel Serres, Joshua Simmons, Hito Steyerl, Aleksandr Rodchenko and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.

Life of O.

Lúa Coderch

19.10.2018 –

13.01.2019

Coordination and production:
CentroCentro

Curator:
Sonia Fernández Pan

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Activities

Strata by Ariadna Guiteras
Performance
20.11.2018 – 6pm.

How can we think in a multiple voice from a situated body? In a voice that's not one, but many. Not a voice, just voice. Voice as a process of relationships, a jumble, an accumulation of everything else. Of you, of me, of our environment, in the present, past and future continuous. As the voice of a medium through whom the dead speak, or the streamed voice that travels without a body, or the voice of your grandmother using your speech.

Life of O. by Lúa Coderch
Featuring Julia Spínola
18.12.2018 – 6pm.

Each of the exhibitions in the series *Mirror Becomes a Razor When It's Broken* features a specific activity that functions as another layer of meaning in each of the projects by the artists taking part in it. For *Life of O.* by Lúa Coderch, we invited Julia Spínola to take a personal tour through matter and objects based on reference points that may (or may not) be connected to her artistic practice.

Life of O.

Life of O.

A video installation, written, designed and directed by Lúa Coderch, with videography by Adrià Sunyol Estadella.

With soundtrack designed by Lucrecia Dalt.

With paintings by Rasmus Nilausen.

With the collaboration of Laura Benítez, Lluís Nacenta, María Fernanda Moscoso, Marc Vives, Irina Mutt, Sergi Botella, Julieta Lutti Cañellas, María Nova López, Manu Rastrollo (Artic), Jara Rocha and Julia Spínola.

Museographic Design:

Lúa Coderch / Ester Nacenta

Graphic Design:

ODD Oficina de disseny

(Diego Bustamante, Katharina Hetzeneder, Ariadna Serrahima)

English text review:

Jay R Heald

Print:

Imprentex

Thanks to:

galería àngels barcelona, Visitación Bisquert, Lluís Nacenta, Salamina, Luis Hernández Baena, Blanca Callén, garcía | galería, Berta Caldentey.

Lúa Coderch

19.10.2018 – 13.01.2019 CentroCentro

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