ALTERED VIEWS

Voluspa Jarpa has presented her project for the Chilean Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale under the title "Altered Views." The project originates in a question the artist seeks to answer: how is the modernist, Eurocentric and colonial gaze configured? The gaze that later expands from Europe to the USA and constructs a symbolic contempt that is imposed as political, cultural and economic subjugation in non-hegemonic regions?

This is the beginning of a new research project which takes as its starting point the crossover between different cases in European history from the 17th to the 20th Century, based on the activity of seeing, observing and analyzing as a construction of the gaze. To do so, the work seeks to rescue concepts coined from a Eurocentric perspective that shed light on the violence with which the world is reduced to an expansionist, developmentalist and hegemonic model; and to verify this through specific historical cases from which she builds a structure and conceptualization derived from scientific and cultural discourses. Thus, the project is divided into three parts, starting with The Hegemonic Museum, followed by The Subaltern Portrait Gallery, and finishing with the final space by The Emancipatory Opera.

The whole journey is presented as a process in which the gaze is de-colonized. At the same time it questions cultural constructions, since the historical narrative, centralized in Europe and manufactured since the time of absolutist monarchies, transformed all other cultural histories into peripheral histories, and also banished the internal contradictions of these models from its own identity and narrative, reflecting them towards peripheral cultures.

The six case studies presented at The Hegemonic Museum bring together concepts with which the colonies were defined: from cannibalism as a taboo, race and miscegenation, subaltern masculinities and gender conceptions, to civilization and barbarism, and the conflict between monarchy and republic. Using the same hegemonic cultural and scientific forms, the museum serves to study and analyse the behavior of the white, heterosexual, patriarchal, and hegemonic male, which in turn triggered the start of the project.

As an outcome of the process of decolonization itself, the forms that were adopted locally in the colonies are questioned as new forms of hegemony that erase other know-how, forms and knowledge that were supplanted or forgotten in the hegemonic colonial legacy. Therefore, it could be hypothesized that the concepts imposed on the other are products of the rejection and projection of one's own; in this sense, the project seeks to make the counterpoint between hegemony and subalternity perceptible, thereby tracing the paths to contemporary emancipation.

The project is an invitation to reflect on issues that prevail and are still visible in our contemporary society, such as racism, patriarchy, economic interests and diverse hegemonic forms, contemporary vestiges of the colonial mentality.

Agustín Pérez Rubio
Curator