

“Die Stelle, an der er dem Unerkannten ausfsitz”.
[Amparo Sard’s *punctualizing*¹ heautoscopy].

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“I’m falling asleep. I’m falling into sleep and, if I fall, it’s from the effect of sleep. Just as I droop with boredom. Just as I droop with anxiety. Just as I fall, in general. Sleep sums up all these falls, it gathers them together. Sleep is heralded and symbolized by the fall, the more or less swift descent, collapsing or wilting. To these we can add: how I wilt with pleasure or sorrow. This fall, in turn, in one or another of its versions, becomes intermixed with the others. When I fall into sleep, when I collapse, everything becomes blurred: pleasure and sorrow, pleasure itself and its own sorrow, sorrow itself and its own pleasure. The shift from one to the other produces tiredness, lassitude, tedium, lethargy, disconnection and detachment. The ship gently cuts loose from its moorings, and drifts.”²

No longer is there any plank to cling onto in the storm following the shipwreck, and neither do we have the (philosophical) authority to look down from high temples upon the world’s general misfortunes. The melancholic’s aristocratic route is literally paved with dizzying tourists trying to see what is on the schedule. The unease, anxiety and incapacity to face up to the trauma have been badly surmounted and camouflaged with a mobilization that we know to be “all-inclusive”. Inopportunistly, Amparo Sard embodies the basic experience of the castaway in all senses of the word or, better still, she subjects herself to being on the brink of drowning. With masterly skill, devoid of balancing acts, radicalism, or supporting publicity, the artist has woven or rather “sewn” a strange “autobiography”, bedecked in ceremonial robes, crinolines or a first-communion gown even though this ritual has long been something of the past. Her work is an allegory of the human condition, offering a vision of both the beauty and monstrosity of the loss of identity. She explores a shadowland, recounting all the uncertainties of which we are comprised. The stance she takes is not that of the hero desirous of enjoying the deadly and accepting the “ties”. Quite the opposite. Amparo Sard dives headlong into a land of risk, transforming Heracleitus’ river of the metamorphoses into lethal water, metonymically revealed by the mirror that inverts it, as if the other – the one that names desire – could manifest itself.

As Beatrice Salvatore says, Amparo Sard’s work is a personal reflection on the human condition, “on the doubts and anxieties that accompany every-day decisions and actions”. To a large extent, her work is an analysis of the twists and turns of human existence; artistic meditations on that always more uncertain, as yet undefined contemporary identity, always midway between indecision and error. Sard emphasizes

¹ The term “punctualizing” refers to Barthes’ concept of “punctum” in *Camera Lucida*; that is, a detail that ‘pricks’ us (draws our attention), unleashing an urge to interpret it.

² Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Fall of Sleep*, published in Spanish as *Tumba de sueño* by Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 2007, p. 11.

the *punctum*, the stigma³ of the real, through an impressively woven *plot* in which she projects her own image in order to highlight, among other things, phallocracy's imposition of a (non) place of deprivation on women.⁴ In her work, a *female libido* emerges, revealing that it is possible to *backstitch* or perforate a different history. That is, that the death drive can be recounted without yielding to patriarchal imagery or resorting to hysterical drama, in something close to the experience of an *autoscopy*⁵ hallucination. Oliver Sacks states that the autoscopy double is literally a mirror image of oneself, with right transposed to left and vice versa, mirroring one's postures and actions. The double is a purely visual phenomenon, with no identity or intentionality of its own. It has no desires and takes no initiatives; it is passive and neutral. In a certain sense, what Amparo Sard's subjective images and projections *do* is more closely associated with a *heautoscopy*; an extremely rare form of autoscopy where there is interaction between the person and their double. The heautoscopy double is capable, within certain limits, of doing what it wants or else it can remain immobile, doing absolutely nothing, although it can often cause panic.⁶ With great brilliance, Amparo Sard reformulates the theme of the *doppelgänger*, a being that is partly oneself and partly the Other; a theme that has had far-reaching effects on literature and Gothic aesthetics, extolling visions of the catastrophic before moving on to more enigmatic configurations.

In 2006, Amparo Sard stated that her papers, obsessively pierced with pins, could be regarded from two perspectives: "On the one hand, the referents (water, the suitcase, pipe, chair, fly, woman etc.) are saying something within the rectangle defined by the paper; something that is open to the world of free interpretation. But on the other hand, there is the language that I work with; a subliminal language; a language that speaks of beauty but which, above all, brings you into contact with the sinister. One example of this sensation of the sinister is when what seems to be alive is in fact dead, as occurs with waxwork figures or robotic dolls or, vice versa, when something that should be alive is in fact an object, as is the case of an amputated arm."⁷ According to Freud, the *disturbing oddness* to which Amparo Sard refers is connected with something that has been repressed and which has

³ "Contrapuntual theory or a procession of stigmata: a wound no doubt comes in (the) place of the point signed by singularity, in (the) place of its very instant (*stigme*), at its point, its tip. But *in (the) place* of the event, place is given over, for the same wound, to substitution, which repeats itself there, retaining of the irreplaceable only a past desire." (Jacques Derrida: "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" in *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*. Published in Spanish as "Las muertes de Roland Barthes" in *Cada vez única, el fin del mundo* by Pre-textos, Valencia, 2005, p. 87).

⁴ "She remains forsaken and abandoned in her lack, default, absence, envy etc., and is led to submit, to follow the dictates issued univocally by the sexual desire, discourse and law of man. Of the father in the first instance." (Luce Irigaray: *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Published in Spanish as *Espéculo de la otra mujer* by Akal, Madrid, 2007, p. 40).

⁵ "In his delightful history of migraine, "Migraine: From Cappadocia to Queen Square", Macdonald Critchley describes it as suffered by the great naturalist Carl Linnaeus: "Often Linnaeus saw 'his other self' strolling in the garden parallel with himself, and the phantom would mimic his movements, i.e. stoop to examine a plant or to pick a flower. Sometimes the alter ego would occupy his own seat at his library desk. Once at a demonstration to his students, he wanted to fetch a specimen from his room. He opened the door rapidly, intending to enter, but pulled up at once saying, 'Oh! I'm there already'." (Oliver Sacks: *Hallucinations*. Published in Spanish as *Alucinaciones* by Anagrama, Barcelona, 2013, p. 271).

⁶ "But the heautoscopy double, mocking or stealing one's identity, may arouse feelings of fear and horror and provoke impulsive and desperate acts." (Oliver Sacks: *Hallucinations*. Published in Spanish as *Alucinaciones* by Anagrama, Barcelona, 2013, p. 275).

⁷ Amparo Sard interviewed by Amelia Aranguren, director of Espacio 1 at the Reina Sofía Art Museum, for the commemorative exhibition of the 160th anniversary of LOEWE, 2006.

returned: in the end, the familiar or homelike cannot conceal the drive-related and, at the same time, abysmal quality of childhood complexes. What we find on Amparo Sard's papers and in her videos cannot be described as cheerful games. There is an undercurrent of danger, solitude and silence. It could even be said that all those images verge upon the *spectral*. Emotional impulses *pierce* the immaculate surface, revealing and embodying anxiety in an almost "tactile" invocation.

Amparo Sard's artwork is not a "hysterical" performance but an obsessive experience, in the conviction that *jouissance* is a function of life, subject also to tension as respects our imagination of the finite or the body's sedimentation when it turns into a corpse's remains.⁸ According to Amparo Sard, "artists are obsessive. They must be obsessive. Obsessions are uncontrolled passions. An artist wants to control the parallel world they have created in their work. We also want to control everything in the real world, but sooner or later we realize that it is not so easy." We have to extricate ourselves from the mire through creation rather than by shouting, in the knowledge that we are simply surviving and that we cannot reject what *befalls us*. Rather than embodying the signifier of the Barred Other (the dead father as a correlate of an absence or gap in the symbolic order), Amparo Sard perforates the white surface of the "textual" as a means of highlighting the foreign body of *extimacy*. It must be remembered that the *extimate* is what is closest and innermost, without relinquishing its external nature. The *intimate* is "the place where one feels at home".⁹ The strangeness and yet familiarity of Amparo Sard's work evoke the idea of *das Unheimliche*, while also bringing to mind a kind of "coded self-portrait" in which she dares to trigger a thought from outside.

In the video where she appears with water up to her neck, Sard has been referred to as a contemporary Medea. Her face might also be regarded as an *apostrophe*, an extreme way of dealing with what terrorizes us. She risks losing her head because she constantly believes that we are always up against the final opportunity to solve our problem. Like that ancient enigma that Oedipus "solved", what is disturbing and ephemeral and leads to our downfall *is actually us*. In his seminar, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan states that there is an anxiety-provoking apparition of an image which summarises what we can call the revelation of that which is least penetrable in the real, of the real lacking any possible mediation, of the ultimate real, of the essential object which is not an object any longer, but this something, faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence; then the subject decomposes and disappears or, in a dream, recognition of his or her basic headless nature occurs. Through her work, Amparo Sard, reaches the "You are that" with an undaunted expression and without hastening toward formlessness. Her vision of anxiety is, to a fair extent, a mirror reflection.¹⁰ *El espejo de la muerte*¹¹ (1929) by José

⁸ "The obsessive subject, in his capacity as the already dead, merely emphasizes and demonstrates an intrinsic, logical characteristic of himself. With this *already deadness*, he radicalizes and takes this capacity to the limit, no doubt accompanied by his difficulties relating to time, because being already dead also has the value of eternalizing his existence and making it immortal and, sometimes, of giving the impression of a wild life, a life that escapes death. From this viewpoint, the obsession shuns death in the sense that it deceives it. *Being already dead* means *beyond life and death*. For this reason, the obsessive subject indicates in what sense he is already dead from the viewpoint of the Other, the Other of the signifier. And this can signify that the Other, as such, does not exist." (Jacques-Alain Miller: *Extimacy*, published in Spain as *Extimidad* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2010, p. 188).

⁹ Jacques-Alain Miller: *Extimacy*, published in Spain as *Extimidad* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2010, p. 15.

¹⁰ It is worth remembering what Lacan says in this respect: Spectre of anxiety, identification of anxiety, the final revelation of *you are this*. *You are this, which is so far from you, this which is the ultimate*

Gutiérrez Solana is precisely one of the works with which Amparo Sard enters into intense dialogue at this superb exhibition at ABC Museum. We tarry before our image is swallowed up by the quicksilver; we dream while we can of that geometrical winged world with which Grau Santos paid tribute to his mother in 1984. Pardon the paradox, but Amparo Sard brings to life the spectral. Her “*punctualizing*” works, with which - to echo her own words - she brings into play “the abyss of the human being”,¹² *touch* us.

It is not the time for the veils to disappear or for the curtain to be dramatically raised but instead, as Amparo Sard does, to accept the *screen*.¹³ We must try and cut across (*traverser*) fantasy, knowing that meaning, as demonstrated by Lévi-Strauss or Lacan, is probably no more than a *surface effect*; a mirage or froth. A *symptomatic reading* denounces the illusion of the essence, profundity or completeness in favour of the reality of divisions, breaking points and maturation. Art is always trying to appropriate the “other scene”; that is, the place where the signifier exercises its function in the production of meanings that remain unconquered by the subject and from which the latter demonstrates his separation by a barrier of resistance. It is this fall by the subject, *about which he is assumed to know*, that is contrasted with the notion of the “liquidation” of transference. Art can disrupt what the symptom imposes; that is, the truth. In the linking of the symptom to the symbol, there is no more than a false hole.¹⁴ Language is linked to something that perforates the real: Amparo Sard’s papers are a perfect representation of this. To avoid fading away, we (barred subjects) need to *resume* the experience, albeit through insinuation. As Lacan says, the real can be found in the confusions of truth.¹⁵ The real is always a fragment, a shoot around which thought weaves stories; the stigma of the real is not to connect with anything. Between voracious passion and overwhelming sentiment, everything can seem to fade into nonsense, into those distressing errors that Amparo Sard continually reveals; that multiplication of holes, which might be none other than the multiplication of the void experienced by subjects after the loss of loved ones.¹⁶

formlessness. See Jacques Lacan: *Seminar 2. The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. Published in Spain as *El Seminario 2. El Yo en la Teoría de Freud y en la Técnica Psicoanalítica* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1983, pp. 240-241.

¹¹ Translator’s note: The Mirror of Death.

¹² In an interview about the exhibition at ABC Museum, Amparo Sard stated that her work deals with the idea of immateriality, “the spectral, evanescent, what is diluted as if it were yet another version of the other world; the world of states of mind or the abyss of being.”

¹³ “It is here that we must not forget the radical ambiguity of the Lacanian Real: it is not the ultimate referent to be covered/gentrified/domesticated by the screen of fantasy; the real is also and primarily the screen itself as the obstacle that always already distorts our perception of the referent, of the reality out there.” (Slavoj Žižek: Published in Spanish as *Lacrimae Rerum. Ensayos sobre cine moderno y ciberespacio* by Debate, Barcelona, 2006, p. 186).

¹⁴ See Jacques Lacan: *Le Sinthome*, published in Spanish as *El sinthome. El Seminario 23* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 24. The libido participates in the hole, just like other modes through which the body and the real are represented; something that, as Lacan himself said, attempts to achieve the function of art.

¹⁵ “This is what led me to the idea of the knot, which results from this – the truth is interpenetrated, due to the fact that its use creates meaning out of everything; and this is because it slides, it is sucked up by the image of the bodily hole which emits it, namely the sucking mouth. There is a dynamics of the gaze which is centrifugal (that is, which starts from the seeing eye), but also a dynamics of the blind spot - it starts from the moment of seeing and takes it as a support. In fact, the eye sees instantaneously – this is what is called intuition, which redoubles what is termed space in the image.” (Jacques Lacan: *Le Sinthome*, published in Spanish as *El sinthome. El Seminario 23* by Paidós, 2006, p. 83).

¹⁶ “Hallucinations brought about by a loss and the ensuing pain are particularly common: above all, after the death of a spouse following decades together. Losing a parent, spouse or child is to lose part of oneself and the pain causes a sudden hole in one’s life, a hole that must somehow be filled. This presents

At the exhibition at ABC Museum entitled *La otra* (The Other), Amparo Sard meditates in her own words on “immateriality, the spectral and evanescent, when it is diluted as if it were yet another version of the other world. It is an analysis of sensations, a metaphor for the other self”. The works have an element of a “retrospective scene” evocative of profound illusionary states or perhaps they are responses to the emergence or persistence of the traumatic. Time and time again, Amparo Sard goes back to piercing the “immaculate” surface, taking the principle of pleasure, in Freudian style, to a more sombre level of *compulsion-repetition*. We know that traumatic events can be conserved in a memory that has nothing to do with retrospection or recollections, but with a different, isolated, unintegrated dimension.

In her recent projects, Amparo Sard intensifies her work, exploring the issue of threshold states: “A person’s *limit*,” the artist notes, “is their skin, if we are talking about something tangible the *limit* of their soul or their essence or of what is truly important is something rather more complex. And by chance, in mathematics, *limits* serve to calculate which way a trend is going in order to forecast what will happen.” The notion of *being borderline* and *the ontology of limits* developed by Eugenio Triás fits in with the question that Amparo Sard poses on the limits to which we *tend*. What interests her are not so much topological issues as drives; that is, in contrast with what is geometrically traced or mathematically clarified, the aim is to move the instinctive toward a “driven poetics”, a delimitation of life based on experience-related dimensions.¹⁷ One of her recent works evokes a “strange greeting” or corporal awareness: three hands are held by a forearm, forming a triangle or Möbius strip. Amparo Sard transports us to an *existential knot*, where, in her own words “limits do not lead to an outcome, they act as a guide. We can take decisions or react in a way that will somehow modify reality, but *they will only uncouple it a bit* because, both through experience and genetics, we are going to follow an approximate pattern.” In this last project on the theme of limits by Amparo Sard, the main sculpture is a huge life buoy, hanging in fragments. It gives the impression that the space itself is being aided following a shipwreck, perhaps because the subject is unable to understand that type of *non place*, although it also alludes, as explicitly shown in the video *Hauptpunkt*, to the need to protect nature from our immense destructive power.

In Amparo Sard’s work, there is a search for a certain sensitivity; that is, a search for bodily passion and earth’s intensity when everything is being driven toward a hypnotic “virtualization”. The society of digital obscenity fails to remember the world’s fertile substratum, which has nothing to do with the “neutralized” solidarity of the cybernetic confessional wall’s *like*. Amparo Sard feels the need to protect a burnt bush with a glass case or to perforate a paper in order to draw linked hands on whose skin treelike shapes germinate. She explores the dilemmas of embodiment with extreme intensity. “Embodiment,” wrote Oliver Sacks, “seems to be the surest thing in the world, the one

a cognitive, perceptive and also emotional problem, and the painful longing for reality to be different.” (Oliver Sacks: *Hallucinations*, published in Spanish as *Alucinaciones* by Anagrama, Barcelona, 2013, p. 241).

¹⁷ “Mathematically speaking,” said Amparo Sard about one of her latest works, “limits are calculated by measuring the force that is applied (that which makes a constant change) and by measuring the time that this force is applied or the time it takes to reapply it. That is, analysing time. In human behaviour, these forces or reactions are instinctive. But after reading a bit more, I thought it would be fascinating for them to differentiate between instinct of a more animal kind (and, depending on genetics) drives more directed at human reactions, where experience is influential.”

irrefutable fact. We think of ourselves as being in our bodies, and of our bodies as belonging to us, and us alone: thus we look out on the world with our own eyes, walk with our own legs, shake hands with our own hands. We have a sense, too, that consciousness is in our own head. It has long been assumed that the body image or body schema is a fixed and stable part of one's awareness, perhaps in part hardwired and largely sustained and affirmed by the continuing proprioceptive feedback from joint and muscle receptors regarding the position and movement of one's limbs. There was general astonishment, therefore, when Mathew Botvinick and Jonathan Cohen showed, in 1998, that a rubber hand, under the right circumstances, could be mistaken for one's own. If a subject's real hand is hidden under a table, while the rubber hand is visible before him, and both are stroked in synchrony, then the subject has the convincing illusion, even though he knows better, that the rubber hand is his – and that the sensation of being stroked is located in this inanimate though lifelike object.”¹⁸ Amparo Sard seduces us with that “caress”, she traces the imaginary space where feeling could be recovered and creates a new *tribute to the hand*.

Drive is the echo in the body of the fact that there is speech. According to Lacan, for the *sinthome* to resound, the body must be sensitive to it. “It is the body that has some orifices, of which the most important is the ear because it cannot be blocked, stopped or closed. Through this channel, there is a response in the body by what I have termed the voice.”¹⁹ For Amparo Sard, all the real is perforated, the skin is marked with perfect holes that cast doubt on the conventional idea of “innerness”. Our limits are not solidly traced,²⁰ neither in physical nor behavioural terms. Although Amparo Sard states that, generally, her work deals with tolerance,²¹ it is not a question of adapting to the (in the end repressive) rules of an “abstract respect for the other”, but of a desire to understand how we can inhabit a world in which everything has become inhospitable.

“More than the immateriality of ‘the other life’,” says Amparo Sard, “I like the immateriality of the psychological. It represents giving the weight of dead flesh, a dead weight, to something so lightweight and ethereal as the soul. Cutting the soul, the soul of ideas, to analyse them surgically.” According to Lacan, the object of desire is libidinally formed by a spectre, not only because it corresponds to another object, even though it is a lost one, but because there is no longer or there is simply not (since in reality there never was) a correspondence with any other object. This is when the

¹⁸ Oliver Sacks: *Hallucinations*, published in Spain as *Alucinaciones* by Anagrama, Barcelona, 2013, pp. 279-280.

¹⁹ Jacques Lacan: *Le Sinthome*. Published in Spanish as *El sinthome. El Seminario 23* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 18.

²⁰ “If you could see everything that was happening in all my nerve fibres and all my inputs and all my outputs, then it wouldn't be very sensible to draw a line around me and say ‘he is limited’ there. There is a mass of pathways for messages and information to travel on in this room. If you want to make a diagram of the room, it would look something like this. Here we have an example: this counter is Gregory Bateson. And the pathways cross something that is perhaps my skin, but the skin is not, in itself, a pathway. The skin is a pickup affair. It's not the blind man's stick. It's the tip of the blind man's stick but not the stick itself.” (Gregory Bateson: “Intelligence, Experience and Evolution”, published in Spain as “Inteligencia, experiencia y evolución” in *La unidad sagrada. Pasos ulteriores hacia una ecología de la mente*, published by Gedisa, Barcelona, 1993, pp. 356-357).

²¹ “All my work,” says Amparo Sard, “is woven around the concept of tolerance. That delicate bridge between one and the other and, for this reason, the other self emerges, the one that ‘we should be’. When we decide to change the ‘yes’ for ‘no’ or vice versa. That cut-off point; that turning point that can be so subliminal and yet so intense when we talk about our vital spaces. It is that tension which is created that interests me.”

reference to the *hole in the real*²² appears, designating the process in which everything rejected in the symbolic reappears in the real.²³ Amparo Sard's perforated drawings and sculptures "manifest" the spectral dimension that alludes to a story of desires and losses. The act of perforating has nothing to do with "destructive children's" impulses but with a compulsion for repetition that can perhaps be related to the (Freudian) *fort-da* game, which is not only connected with distance from the maternal but with the masochistic configuration of sexuality.²⁴ The white surface on which Amparo Sard works looks like a support for drawing or writing, but it can also allude, in psychoanalytical contexts, to the libidinous and to what Lacan termed *lamelle*.²⁵

Amparo Sard's aesthetics do not function in the manner of a *negative heautoscopy*²⁶ but as a kind of *energetic theatre*,²⁷ where her images bring us into contact with matter's poetic facet, with that nature that throbs inside us, despite everything. What Amparo Sard does is to propose indecision as a suspended formula "for achieving a recomposed identity".²⁸ Error is a consequence of the unstoppable deployment of an instinctive life that does not tend toward unitary totality but which drags us along and leaves us on a

²² Lacan, as I have said, considers the object of desire to be an absolute existent with no correspondence. "This version classifies the object with no correspondence as a hole in the real. It will certainly converge with the definition of the object as an impossible one (since the impossible defines the real as such for Lacan), but, above all, the reference to a hole in the real (even though it continues to be a metaphor) allows Lacan to highlight the fact that such an impossibility functions topologically as a place; a place where the subject can transfer all kinds of things, particularly images and signifiers brought into play in mourning." (Jean Allouch: *The Erotics of Mourning in the Time of Dry Death*. Published in Spanish as *Erótica del duelo en tiempos de la muerte seca* by Literales, Tucumán, 2006, pp. 289-90).

²³ Jacques Lacan: *Le désir et son interprétation*, session dated April 22nd 1959, (unpublished seminar), p. 22.

²⁴ "Genetically, sexuality is inseparable from the experience of failure or, to put it another way, the possibility of instinctual pleasures in the past were already, from the very beginning, inseparable from and finally vanquished by the actuality of pain. Sexuality comes at the 'wrong time' in human life – but, as I have been suggesting, it is *created* by that wrong time... Human sexuality is constituted as a kind of psychic shattering, as a threat to the stability and integrity of the self – a threat which perhaps only the masochistic nature of sexual pleasure allows us to survive." (Leo Bersani: *The Freudian Body. Psychoanalysis and Art*. Published in Spanish as *El cuerpo freudiano. Psicoanálisis y arte* by El cuenco de plata, Tucumán, 2011, pp. 82-83).

²⁵ "The libido, as its name indicates, cannot avoid participating in the hole, just like as other forms through which the body and the real are presented. It is obviously in this way that I am attempting to achieve the function of art. Somehow it is implied in what is left blank as the fourth term [the symbolic, imaginary, real and symptom]. I will try to substantialise when I say that art can even reach the symptom. It is totally logical for me to remind you of the myth of the lamelle." (Jacques Lacan: *The Sinthome*. Published in Spanish as *El sinthome. El Seminario 23* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2006 p. 41).

²⁶ "Let us speak of the horror of the mirror: the *negative heautoscopy*, or disappearance of the mirror image. It is not only a question of us contemplating the work of transience, impermanence and death on an everyday basis in front of the mirror, but of an event of an affective and unquestionably dramatic and disconcerting nature." (Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego: *Ser y no ser. Figuras en el dominio de lo espectral*, Ed. Micromegas, Murcia, 2013, p. 26).

²⁷ "Jean-François Lyotard cites a lovely example by Hans Bellmer in which representation becomes a problem: "I feel a sharp pain in a tooth, I clench my fist, the nails dig hard into my hand. Two possibilities. Does the gesture by my hand represent my tooth's suffering? And to what does this sign allude?" Lyotard talks here about a modified identity from the theatre, from which we must start out if we want to think of a theatre that is more than drama. He calls it *energetic theatre*. This is not a theatre of meaning but of "forces, intensities, and present affects". (Hans-Thies Lehmann: *Post-Dramatic Theatre*, published in Spanish as *Teatro posdramático* by Cendeac, Murcia, 2013, p. 66).

²⁸ Antonio d'Avossa: "El sueño de la razón genera moscas" in *Amparo Sard. La Mujer Mosca*, Galería Paola Verrengia, 2005.

fragmentary plane or in a world of mirages that allows fantasy to take flight.²⁹ The artist explains that the work *Con el agua al cuello*³⁰ (2004) reflects the anxiety generated by indecision: “an unsettling impasse occurs when the authentic me is too repressed by the other me, the one that society forces us to be”.³¹ In the final instance, there is no symbolic element without the experience of unease.

In Amparo Sard’s work, water refers to the time that elapses without any decision being taken. And in passing from paralysis, *the error occurs*. In the series *El error* (The Mistake, 2007-2008), the artist can be seen drowning in a kind of fish-tank/coffin or sitting halfway through a wall. In other examples, she is holding a mirror, reflected in it without any kind of “narcissism”. The video shows the body’s adjustment to a board on which her figure has been cut out. It gives the impression that Amparo Sard is manifesting what Bachelard calls “the Ophelia complex”.³² In *Segundo error (Second Error)*, there seems to be a mirror under the water; light reveals suffering on the woman’s face and her crazy desire to go further. Anxiety is self-nourished: memory of the errors amplifies this sensation of the abyss. “Amparo Sard’s women, suspended brides, have lost their modesty and fear. They have been self-explanatory for some time now and they convey pure sensations. They do not depend on anyone, just on themselves, but they will be delighted to share your company. Tied to the world by umbilical cords that they never manage to get rid of, with water up to their necks but still breathing, they run, fly precariously, cross walls and waters and are recomposed in a jiffy.”³³ And, nonetheless, these *over-the-top actions* lacking in air fill spectators with a sense of terror. What remains is an impression of the senseless nature of meaning.

Anxiety appears and disappears in Amparo Sard’s images; it crosses holes, proposing a visibility on the brink of the barely perceptible.³⁴ Her completely *punctualized* work moves us³⁵ and, even though it is crossed with water, it has the imaginary capacity to burn us. We can recapture that notion of Antonin Artaud’s *The Theatre and Culture* when he demands to be like men condemned to fire’s torments who make signs over their bonfires.³⁶ This visionary, who wanted to stage life (in its unrepresentable facet),

²⁹ “Man’s instinctive life is characterized by unease, fragmentation, fundamental discord, a basic lack of adaptation, and anarchy, opening up all possibilities of displacement; that is of error: experience itself of analysis demonstrates this. Additionally, if the object is only graspable as a mirage, the mirage of unity that cannot be re-understood at an imaginary level, then all object relations can only be affected by a fundamental uncertainty.” (Jacques Lacan: *Seminar 2. The Ego in Freud’s Theory*. Published in Spanish as *El Seminario 2. El Yo en la Teoría de Freud y en la Técnica Psicoanalítica* by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1983, pp. 256-257).

³⁰ Translator’s note: Up to Your Neck in it. (Literally, in Spanish, “Up to Your Neck in Water”).

³¹ Amparo Sard: article on the subject of *Con el agua al cuello*, 2004.

³² See Gaston Bachelard: *El agua y los sueños*, published by Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1978, pp. 125-143.

³³ Pilar Garcés: “Un mundo de perlé” in *Art Report*, Sa Nostra, Palma de Mallorca, 2005.

³⁴ “Since anxiety signifies the presence of an absence and present absence, inexistent existence and the inexistence of existence, all at the same time. In short, the invisible presence of that which is not there. Anxiety is unquestionably a basic state of mind. In it, in the manner of Schelling, we touch upon the incomprehensible *remains* of reality” (Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego: *Ser y no ser. Figuras en el dominio de lo espectral*, published by Micromegas, Murcia, 2013, p. 14).

³⁵ We can revive Barthes’ idea of photography as the absolute particular, sovereign contingency, “the *this*. In short, what Lacan calls the *Tuché*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real in its indefatigable expression.” (Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*. Published in Spanish as *La cámara lúcida. Nota sobre la fotografía* by Paidós, Barcelona, 1990, p. 31).

³⁶ Antonin Artaud: “The Theatre and Culture” in *The Theatre and its Double*, published in Spanish as *El teatro y su doble* by Edhasa, Barcelona, 1978, p. 14.

was not wrong when he stated that our petrified idea of art can be added to our notion of a shadowless culture, where our spirit only finds a vacuum. The intense *process of creating a self-portrait* in which Amparo Sard engages - where subjectivity ranges from the mirror to the hallucinatory abyss, from the face to the black hole of *faciality*³⁷ - tackles the aspect of the vacuum without panic and also without the need to fill in the disturbing reality. When I look at her work, marked by holes or dots, I remember that observation by Blanchot, according to which Giacometti would have reached *a point* where things are irreducible.³⁸

The spectral-pierced space³⁹ promises no reconciliation and neither is there a catharsis that frees us from turbulent emotions. As Buffon said in his *Natural History*, “we shall never penetrate, of course, into the intimate structure of things”. Amparo Sard’s *limitative* investigations take us irresistibly from the intimate to the inhospitable, from the superficial to volumes, from white to shade, from wakefulness to dreaming. In this artist, there is evidently a clear poetic bid to explore the labyrinths of dreams and that non-measurable time in which the unforeseen can occur. As Freud would say, the navel of dreams is *the unknown*, something that goes beyond the fabric of the intellectual world.⁴⁰ Art inspires a pleasurable *pause*. In the case of Amparo Sard’s work, it is, above all, a demand for a life of singular intensity. We must be receptive to everything, be capable – in Freudian terms – of making permanent “free associations”; that is, working toward a *radical excitation of dreams*, in the awareness that its reverse is not reality⁴¹. Amparo Sard explores the unknown through the familiar. She crosses visible limits to offer us an insight into what Freud called *eine Stelle im Dunkel*, that shadowland associated with “the navel of dreams”. Through the drive-inspired holes perhaps a life

³⁷ “The black hole of faciality somehow beams onto the whole of the semiotic screen that constitutes the empty reflexive consciousness, while it recentres the set of meaningful facialities. Insofar as it contaminates all modes of semiotization, the black hole moves, it invades the universe, and rests on any point of intensity in order to overcode it. All closure points, all potentialities of arborescence combine and resonate in order to try and avoid the rhizomatic impulses of different unique traits transported by the semiotic components, absorbing them in a central black hole.” (Félix Guattari: *Líneas de fuga. Por otro mundo de posibles*, published by Cactus, Buenos Aires, 2013, p. 242).

³⁸ “When we look at Giacometti’s sculptures, there is a vantage point where they are no longer subject to the fluctuations of appearance or to the movement of perspective. One sees them absolutely: no longer reduced, but withdrawn from reduction, irreducible, and, in space, masters of space through their power to substitute for space the unmalleable, lifeless profundity of the imaginary. This point, whence we see them irreducible, puts us at the vanishing point ourselves; it is the point at which here coincides with nowhere. To write is to find this point. No one writes who has not enabled language to maintain or provoke contact with this point.” (Maurice Blanchot: *L’espacio literario*, published by Gallimard, Paris, 1955, p. 52).

³⁹ “The space of the ghost is no longer a predictable, measurable Euclidean space, but another: a delirious, overwhelming, perforated other.” (Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego: *Ser y no ser. Figuras en el dominio de lo espectral*, published by Micromegas, Murcia, 2013, pp. 72-73).

⁴⁰ “In the best interpreted dreams we often have to leave one passage in obscurity because we observe during the interpretation that we have here a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled, and which furnishes no fresh contribution to the dream-content. This, then, is the keystone of the dream, the point at which it ascends into the unknown. For the dream-thoughts which we encounter during the interpretation commonly have no termination, but run in all directions into the net-like entanglement of our intellectual world. It is from some denser part of this fabric that the dream-wish then arises.” (Sigmund Freud: *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Published in Spanish as *La interpretación de los sueños*, vol. 3, by Cátedra, Madrid, 1988, p. 152).

⁴¹ “The reverse of a dream is not reality, since the reminiscent can sink, be hit smack in the face by an oar, or shatter into fragmentary fish, but if its interwoven adventure finishes, it acquires needs that fly at the pace of a gorgon in the air which contracts.” (José Lezama Lima: *Las eras imaginarias*, published by Fundamentos, Madrid, 1971, p. 146).

can be achieved that is not trapped by basic repressions.⁴² When our eyelids close, we begin to draw near to the other “knot in speech”, to that experience of dreaming that is prolonged in art, like a process of allegorization that manages to shun literalism. Amparo Sard offers us *epiphanies* that stem from what Jean-Luc Nancy calls “the blind task of sleep”;⁴³ her interlaced hands mark the boundaries of a space inhabited by a poetic existence that pierces us and compels us to think of the other’s desire and the *other’s* singular *punctualizations*.

⁴² See considerations on “*Das Unerkannte*” by Jacques-Alain Miller in “Nota paso a paso” in Jacques Lacan: *El sinthome. El Seminario 23*, by Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 233. Published in English as *The Sinthome*.

⁴³ “Not seeing connects with some possibility of help or hope for sight. We do not see in the darkness, which in a way can be dissipated. But seeing that we see nothing and that there is nothing to see, seeing sight clinging to itself as to its sole object, that is like seeing the invisible, surely, but it is only like its other side or its negative. To sojourn in just that other side, not to try to discern the invisible, that is the blind task of sleep.” (Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Fall of Sleep*. Published in Spanish as *Tumba de sueño*, by Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 2007, p. 65).