

THE PASSERBY
2015, cast
polyurethane,
pigment, and tape,
dimensions variable.
Images courtesy of
the artist and Foxy
Production.

Ester Partegàs



by Eduardo
Abaroa

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left: **THE PASSERBY**
2015, cast polyurethane, pigment, and tape, dimensions variable.

opposite: **UNTITLED (CONTAINERS AND LABELS)**
2015, cast polyurethane, metal and acrylic on paper, dimensions variable.

Mold-making and photography have an ambiguous relationship to whatever they reproduce. They can deliver the most faithful rendition of a given model, but it is precisely this similarity that makes them extraordinary, unreal. Both reproduction techniques depend on an accurate register of a given reality; they are relatively artless if compared with life drawing or sculpting, which require motor coordination and a specific power of imagination. There is little room for interpretation when making a mold. Yet these relatively automatic processes rarely fail to seduce—death masks and photographic portraits can be more fascinating than a living face.

“The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ester Partegàs turns us into victims of a comparable mirage. The delicate transparent screens that she has presented in her fourth show at Foxy Production, *The Passerby*, are not a departure from her previous experiments with photographic murals, which reproduce street alleys and graffiti. While the materials are completely different, the same concerns are present. Productive tensions arise between context and object, outside and inside, the ordinary and rarefied. The urban milieu is subtly present in hanging transparent pieces inspired by the multicolored stands of street vendors in Mexico City.

Emerson and Georges Perec, with almost a century between them, shared an intention: to recover a primordial amazement that has been lost by habit. Emerson tried to reenact the glory of a godly existence through the contemplation of Nature. Perec’s approach seems less grandiose, and still his contemplation of the street has an ascetic flavor. They both mention technology and

artifice as a way to activate the intensity of the moment of discovery. A state of peace is necessary to open the observer’s perception.

The streets of Mexico City can be overwhelming. A sensitive explorer of the outdoor markets will feel lost in irregular corridors constructed with pink, blue, or red squares of plastic tarp. The dazzling profusion of the most diverse and seemingly useless products and pirated versions of Hollywood movies makes one wonder who will ever buy such an impossible amount of stuff. This is why learning that Partegàs’s installation riffs off of the market stalls’ provisional structures is so appealing. Partegàs’s pieces are molded by pouring slightly tinted resin onto actual squares of canvas, so that the creases are registered as the material hardens, to form what looks like the surface of the Earth seen from an airplane or the waves of a colorless ocean. Transparency produces a spectral, luminous quality. The result is a faint memory of that commodity chaos. The recollection of an everyday event is transformed, generating a completely different experience.

These screens are not servile representations, but a reflection on the act of reproduction. Perception squints as it perceives itself.

—Eduardo Abaroa is an artist and writer working in the fields of sculpture, installation, and live action. His recent exhibitions include *Total Destruction of the Museum of Anthropology* at kurimanzutto, Mexico City, and *Photosynthesis* in Flora, Colombia.



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