

José Vera Matos: *Insano, injusto, extremadamente entretenido* [Insane, unfair, extremely entertaining]

This exhibition is halfway between an autobiographical reflection and a social critique of this "unhealthy, unfair, extremely entertaining" world. Although it is possible to read personal clues and political commentaries intertwined in these works, the body of work presented by José Vera Matos arises from an exploratory process and, therefore, implies uncertainty. What the artist tempts in these works is unknown even to himself.

This exhibition is like a journey through the history of a promise and its unfulfillment: the promise of the future, understood as something expected and aspired to (as evidenced by many of our futuristic utopias), and not more of the same or even something much worse than what was already there and what we have received in the end.

The artist looks into his personal history to approach this larger story, taking as a starting point the mythical "Whole Earth Catalog", a countercultural magazine published in California in the late 1960s, aimed at improving life from non-conventional perspectives (environmentalism, vegetarianism, mysticism, self-sufficiency, etc.). Vera revisits this document as if it were a time capsule, discovering in it a guide to save the world that comes too late. Or perhaps it has become its opposite and what we are seeing are its effects (Steve Jobs—whom I owe the machine on which I am writing this and which is probably made with coltan excavated by hand from a mine in Congo—considered the "Whole Earth Catalog" a Google in pocket book format).

Following the logic of hyperlinks, Vera unleashes a universe of cultural and discursive associations that invite the discovery of links, causes and effects. The artist speaks to us of worlds in collision, being absorbed and digested, in spite of themselves, by a voracious and constantly reproducing world-system capable of phagocytizing any form of criticism and transforming it into a new commodity.

Thus, for example, the installation with the big T-shirt suggests how convictions can be confused with posturing and the grandiloquence of our ideologies is susceptible to become a fashion, and eventually be condemned to insignificance. The recliner sculpture seems to allude to a crossroads (precipitated by the pandemic) where entertainment, physical activity and mysticism are intertwined to the point of hanging. The huge sound box incorporates an unmistakable reference to music, but also collates notions of art, object, production, and tradition, as well as categories of labor and their cultural valuation, through the dialogue between luthier and artist that the work that implies.

Behind "Insano, injusto, extremadamente entretenido" [Insane, unfair, extremely entertaining], we can see an artist recognizing and facing his own history, which is also the history of his generation and the one that precedes him. Torn between hope and the acknowledgment of defeat, José Vera points to the sky and says "make a wish", pointing to a shooting star that is none other than the asteroid Chicxulub.

Max Hernández Calvo