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INSTRUCTIONS FROM LIGHT

Notes on *Precuela* [Prequel] by Eduardo Basualdo
by Martín Craciun

«If I get lost, bad luck, the night will be right» sings the famous Uruguayan pop music group *Los Olimareños*, referring to a text written by Rubén Leña (Uruguay, 1925–1995). This Uruguayan writer and composer from Treinta y Tres sought to move beyond tradition and nativism, and the prose of his song continues, «that the night be so black / is no great difficulty / with reins firmly in hand / a tracker finds his way».⁽¹⁾

Precuela [Prequel] is Eduardo Basualdo's first solo exhibition in Uruguay. Its title serves as a portal to a universe that is yet to be deciphered. Basualdo works with the vertigo of a shattered timeline and creates within a play of time and presence on the prequel of a story that is unknown to us, on the origin of something that is not named, not manifested, and above all, not shown.

Multiple sculptures articulate the space, setting the tone for *Precuela*, Eduardo Basualdo's project for Walden Naturae. A sensation of luminosity inundates the space, but everything is actually quite dark. Light is a means that enables our eyes to see the darkness. Goethe used to consider the dark as an active, vibrant and even luminous—you might say—ingredient. Color in itself is a degree of darkness, he wrote,⁽²⁾ suggesting that whether we perceive it or not, there is a world of latent phenomena that emerge from the dynamic interaction between light and darkness.

Precuela functions like a shared garden of the imagination, shared between artist and visitors; it is a staged game of sorts, an ensemble, an exhibition that could be many but is defined in the act of effectively taking place. It offers us the opportunity to delve into Basualdo's personal worlds, while proposing a radical system for producing art as sensory knowledge. To do so, a celebration has been orchestrated of artistic investigation and experimentation in its most visceral state. Here, the energy Basualdo deploys in the space undergoes continual transformation, managing to leave repetitive grooves behind and strike out on a new path.

Based on the nature of representation, these works embrace poetics and try out ideas regarding questions that emerge and appear repeatedly. They are germinal forms, in a state of latency that condenses their narrative potential as if in an embryonic state. This world of entities and beings makes up a symbolic machinery, in operation at the moment prior to forming a body. Pursuing a

question may well be a pertinent strategy for embracing this universe.

The installation functions like a scenario. Basualdo's drawings can be understood as a parallel discourse continually in dialog with the sculptures and three-dimensional works. The script and the playwriting seem to be in the midst of being resolved as the work takes place, an autopsy in which the forensic is also the cadaver, asking for the gaze to be directed deep inside.

The form of this living illusion may be beautiful or horrible. Dark and luminous, *Precuela* suggests the cost of creating lies, fights against personal demons and attempts to put creativity at the core of all concerns.

There is an almost enjoyable sort of fatalism in all this, the drawings are flooded with atmospheric melancholy. Nothing really exists separately in them, or does it? The different scenes can be read as parts of a whole, intertwined, in a search beyond rationality. Basualdo draws incessantly and projects his work as a way of seeing things. (Here we have the artist dedicated to creation in its most pure and experimental form.) He seeks to nourish the imagination, allowing himself to see from other perspectives. His drawings are dominated by a certain degree of intention, a sensation of estrangement or what might be the weight of concentrated thought, from which we try to extract a meaning, perhaps a truth. References to the cavern are recurring and systematic in Basualdo's work,⁽³⁾ where we frequently find ourselves faced with large stones or cavernous shapes. Here, the cavern has become flat, remained open and its transformation is suspended. It is a fiction made of matter and energy. The forms allow a glimpse of their structures, skeletons that disable the artifice of simulacrum. It is the spectacle of a scenario that is illuminated and filled with mystery. The work sustains a latent interest rather than dying in the present.

Precuela challenges aesthetic and ideological one-dimensionality in an exercise that can be as poetic as it can formal. It sheds light on the unspoken. It looks to use artistic imagination as a way of keeping knowledge at its highest level of complexity and completeness. In *Precuela*, the viscera of a world are opened up in order to tell something new that did not exist before, or that we were unable to imagine. Today, showing a bit of perspective or uncertainty is almost a provocation. We see that nothing is permanent and yet at the same time, things are and are not, and they are there or they are not. Eduardo Basualdo and

Precuela make us a promise: it is not only a personal vision of sorts to which the public is invited. We could say that the promise of art has always been to invent a future, one that is individual but also social and collective. Here we have a promise of an art that feels, moves and unsettles.

«*Doubt is an homage rendered to hope*»

—Isidore Lucien Ducasse

(Compté de Lautréamont), Montevideo April 4, 1846–Paris, November 24, 1870

(1) «Del templo», Ruben Lena. On the Cantar Opinaldo album by *Los Olimareños*, Orfeo, 1972.

(2) Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre*, 1810, Tübingen: J.G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung.

(3) See *Pupila* [Pupil], Museo Moderno, Buenos Aires, 2022, *Teoría (La cabeza de Goliath)* [Theory (Goliath's Head)], at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2014, *The end of ending*, PSM, Berlin 2012, etc.

EDUARDO BASUALDO
(Buenos Aires, Argentina 1977)

Basualdo lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He studied Fine Arts at the Instituto Nacional de Artes Visuales (IUNA) and continued his formation with different national and international scholarships: the "Beca Kuitca" in Buenos Aires; the "Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture" in Maine, USA and "SAM Art Projects" in Paris, France.

Since the early 2000s, he has participated in diverse events at public and private institutions in different cities throughout the world. In 2022 he presented "Incisivo" [Incisive], a solo exhibition at the Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Germany. In 2014, he exhibited *Teoría (La cabeza de Goliath)* [Theory (Goliath's Head)] at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, France and he was invited to participate in the 56th Biennale di Venezia by curator Okwui Enwezor in 2016. He also participated in Bienal Sur (2017), the Gwangju Biennale (2014), the Biennale d'art Contemporain de Lyon (2011), the Bienal de Mercosur, held in Porto Alegre (2009) and the Bienal de Póntevredra (2006), among others.

In 2022 he produced two large projects in the city of Buenos Aires; the "Pupila" [Pupil] exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, and "Obra del demonio" [Devil's work], a contemporary dance piece directed by Diana Szeinblum, and debuted at the Teatro Nacional Cervantes in Buenos Aires, involving an artistic collaboration on set design. In 2023, he will publish "Ensayo de Escape" [Rehearsal for Escape], a 150-page document that covers his work and organizes it into a morpho-conceptual diagram.

He is currently represented by Galería Ruth Benzacar in Buenos Aires, Argentina, PSM in Berlin, Germany and Galería Luisa Strina in São Paulo, Brazil. Solo exhibitions held at these venues include: "Free Will" (2020), at PSM Gallery, "CasiNo" (2017), at Galería Luisa Strina and "Eter" (2016), at Galería Ruth Benzacar.

His work can be found in different public and private collections, such as the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.; the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon; the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; the Musée d'art contemporain de la Haute-Vienne, Château de Rochechouart, Rochechouart; Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie, Toulouse; the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CiFo), Miami; Banco Supervielle, Buenos Aires; Adrastus Collection, Arévalo, and Juan and Patricia Vergez, Buenos Aires. In addition, some of his works are mounted in public spaces, like *Nosotros* [Us], 2017 in Rosario, Argentina and *Los fantasmas* [Ghosts], 2017 in Garzón, Uruguay. He has been a member of the experimental art group *Provisorio-Permanente* since 2003.

Martín Craciun
(Uruguay, 1980)

Craciun lives and works in Montevideo. He is an independent curator and university professor focused on the relationship between art, media and contemporary culture. As a curator, he has developed exhibition projects in the majority of Uruguay's museums and cultural centers, in addition to projects in Europe, Asia and the Americas. He has been a juror for numerous art prizes and competitions.

Since December 2020 he has been a consultant to the Cultural Department for the administration of the city of Montevideo, and Head Curator of the SUBTE exhibition center. He was the co-curator for Uruguay's pavilion at the 12 Biennale di architettura di Venezia at the 2010 Biennale di Venezia and co-curator for Uruguay's pavilion at the 14 Biennale di architettura di Venezia at the 2014 Biennale di Venezia. He represented Uruguay at the XII Bienal de la Habana in 2015 and at editions 7 and 11 of the Bienal del Mercosur, in 2009 and 2018. He was guest curator for Lisboa as Capital Iberoamericana de la Cultura (2017), and guest curator for the CTM Festival for adventurous music and Art, Berlin (2019 and 2020), the XIII and XIV Bienal de Artes Mediales de Santiago in Chile (2016 and 2018), IX Bienal Internacional de Arte in La Paz, Bolivia (2016) and Fotografía Contemporánea Uruguaya at the Instituto Cervantes, Rome (2019), among others. He was the curator of the cultural program for the Este Arte fair (2016, 2017, 2018).

He was a Professor at the Universidad Católica del Uruguay from 2011 to 2020, and a Professor in the Architecture Department at the Universidad de la República from 2006 to 2010. Since 2010, as Director of the SOCO Festival internacional de música avanzada y cultura contemporánea, he has presented and produced over 100 performances in Uruguay by international artists working with experimental music.