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Nothing tends to be quite so present as what is not there. Absence has the habit, the vocation, the persistence of speaking with a silence that is more powerful than any shout. Just like a whisper frightens more than a peal of thunder, what winds up filling us with dread or alerting our senses tends to be a small noise in the patio that we cannot be sure if we actually heard or just invented. A slight creak, leaves trembling, a wind that comes from the other side.

Sometimes the same occurs with life in general. As time passes by, there is less and less. Not only is there less time, we live with less of everything. We go along discarding, eliminating, fine-tuning the palate, keeping fewer things that nourish us over the years. Occasionally, it is also because the things in question gradually disappear. The people close to us die, the beloved fall out of love, the place where we used to find inspiration or that filled us with expectations speaks in an ever-softer voice, or no longer says anything at all. Our selection process becomes increasingly austere, more rigorous and more personal, although not always more impenetrable.

In the work that Elba Bairon (La Paz, Bolivia, 1947 / Montevideo / Buenos Aires) planned and carried out for the current exhibition at the Walden Naturae space in Garzón, this reduction is in appearance only. It is true that there are not as many elements as in other previous proposals of hers, where sublimated references to the forms of animals, fruit, stones, foods, sections of the body and so forth could be found. In this decanting of her formal repertoire, however, other voices are elevated a bit more, emerging at times unexpectedly for the viewer, staying there alongside like a muffled threat of something, where you don't know whether it might attack you in a moment of distraction, or just remain sleeping by your side, more surprised than you are. What seems to be silent is full of murmurs. What seems peaceful and quiet is disquieting or moves you from a strange place without your quite knowing how or the reason why. And it is here that the welcome mystery appears. The stylization of old elements from her vocabulary enter into play with the pre-existing architecture, and someone might well have passing doubts regarding what rests on the grass, whether it is some part of the building's structure that was finally never used, because the dialog is such that it wasn't simply mounted and left there, resting, until they will come to take it away at some point, although that isn't clear either, because it could be something that was added to the string of evenly spaced windows arranged on the facade. With their monochrome tone and apparent secrecy, constructed elements stripped of any ornament or

color challenge our perception of the architecture and the setting, as well as the space in general, inside and outside the room. Bairon transforms sculptural elements in such a way that you don't always recognize the direction her process is taking. You cannot tell if they are dissolving, on the verge of disappearing, slowly erased out of the landscape until becoming no more than a memory, or, on the contrary, if they are emerging from some other place, in the midst of a mutant transformation. While the objects do maintain their abstract nature, the warmth of the materials and the way forms are handled allows for an ebb and flow between the natural and organic and the other extreme, silent and aseptic, in a pendular movement of similarities and contrasts that comes closer to a soundless chaos than a peaceful, calm certainty. All you need to do is give yourself over to this meditative wait, and let the formal rigor and sensual delicacy applied to elements that seem to be neutral at first, with any excess or accessory information amputated, wind up assaulting you in an inexplicable way, leaving you unable to serenely remain in the exhibition space or on the grounds. This unsettled feeling that takes hold of you when you least realize it resists explanations or motives, and that may be its closest connection with poetry, which by definition has similarly unfathomable rules. If you want to explain or approach it intellectually, its meaning escapes you and it turns into air, flight, into nothing. If, on the other hand, you give in to this territory that is more like metaphysics than rationality, you can suddenly feel the elegance of a curve, a material's kind voice, the persistence of a straight-line surface that will not change no matter how much those around it insist. It has remained still, as you have, in symmetrical mimesis, copying gestures that have now begun to speak a different language. A language that you knew nothing about just a short while ago, whose every word you now understand. It is there, at that precise moment, that you realize that no one is speaking to you. What you hear comes from a different place, from a distant universe, from the yard next door. This unsettling atmosphere that whispers about the unreal does not come from outside, but from within. It is an inner mirror that shows what we were unaware of having, there behind, below, to one side, above, so close and yet so far.

ELBA BAIRON
(Bolivia, 1947)

Bairon settled in Buenos Aires in 1967. Her artistic formation was in drawing, Chinese painting, etching, and lithography. During the eighties, she did illustrations for books by playwright Emeterio Cerro and costumes for his theater productions. Mid-way through the nineties, she begins to work in volume, with relief and sculptural pieces made of plaster and paper pulp presented as installations. She exhibited at the Centro Cultural Rector Ricardo Rojas gallery, an emblematic space during the nineties, and also at other contemporary art spaces and national museums, including the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Museo MALBA, Museo MAMBA, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Rosario (MACRO) and the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bahía Blanca. She participated in art fairs and international exhibitions such as Art Basel, Switzerland; Arco Madrid, Spain; Centro Cultural Cándido Méndez, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Instituto Ítalo Latinoamericano, Rome, Italy; Museo Parque de las Esculturas, Santiago, Chile; Galería Nube, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia and the 33rd edition of the Bienal de São Paulo. In 2012, she received the Grand Prize for New Supports and Installation at the Salón Nacional in Argentina, and the First Prize at the Premio Federico J. Klemm a las Artes Visuales. Her works can be found in private collections and museums in Buenos Aires and other cities in Argentina. She lives and works in Buenos Aires.

FIDEL SCLAVO
(Uruguay, 1960)

He studied Drawing, Painting, and Printmaking at the Faculty of Architecture in Montevideo; he holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences from the Catholic University of Uruguay; and studied with Milton Glaser at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

His works are part of collections such as Phelps Cisneros, Sayago & Pardon, Abstraction in Action, as well as private collections from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico, Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires.

He has published several books, including *Yo soy el que no está*, *El elefante y la hormiga* (Second National Literature Prize, Ministry of Education and Culture, Uruguay), *Zurcidor*, *Vámonos de aquí*, *Los amigos imaginarios* (Bartolomé Hidalgo Award, Montevideo), *Lo que vive en ti*, *La mujer que hablaba con los peces*, *Un señor muy recto y una señora con curvas*, *Todos queremos a alguien*, *Qué ves cuando me ves*, *Arriba/abajo*, *Un lobo*, *Servilletas de Papel*, *Historias que quedan en nada*, *El huevo Redondo*. He also published several books in collaboration with other writers, such as María Negroni, Mario Delgado Aparain, Henry Trujillo, Ildefonso Pereda Valdés, and Cecilia Bonino. He lives and works in Buenos Aires.