**Lebenglik, Fabián, “Los insectos como obra de arte” [Insects as an art piece], *Página/12* newspaper, Buenos Aires, December 13, 2016.**

*La Salida*, exhibition by Miguel Harte at Big Sur gallery.

The artist presents a series of strange works in which he includes dissected beetles with small transformations to give them human features. The obsession with the life of insects led him to collect them.

Partial view of Miguel Harte's exhibition at Big Sur gallery.

The attraction to the fantastic and science fiction has always been strong in the work of Miguel Harte (Buenos Aires, 1961), who now presents La Salida, a "chamber" exhibition in which he displays his world: dissected insects, alone or in groups, in attitudes and activities that cross the animal with the human.

Harte's work during the nineties and part of the 2000s condenses in the "inclusions" that the artist inserts as supposed accidents on polished, shiny, and deceptive surfaces, such as formica, first, and automotive and safe paint, later.

What at the beginning of the nineties was barely a tiny "inclusion," with the passage of time and the development of the work, becomes small included worlds, so that the drops transform into bubbles and spheres: into self-generated and self-sufficient worlds, in which a nature grows that combines the artificial and the dissected. There coexist strange creatures (hybrids between insects and humans) surrounded by an environment that suggests both the submarine and galactic hypothesis or that of some underworld. Any of these reveries functions as a microcosm. His work, of growing complexity, advanced toward the hypertrophy of "inclusions," like abysses opened from faults, craters, fissures, orifices, tunnels and other accidents that emerge under the protection of magmatic surfaces or, as in this case, the wall.

Thus, inclusions grow inward into the forms that contain them, or overflow those same forms, which can no longer serve as a container. In this sense, the idea of the "fault" as a rupture of a naturalized logic is notorious in several of his initial pieces. And the fault can be thought of as an irruption, both in the artist's language and in the viewer's gaze.

In the new exhibition he presents these days, most of the room is occupied by a puddle made of resin and river debris. From there emerge life forms, a kind of roots, where the vegetal crosses with the animal.

On the front wall is embedded a tree knot that forms a niche in which nests a family of enormous dissected beetles.

On the right side wall, small shelves hold glass spheres that contain resin forms in which other

beetles "live."

The large coleoptera that Harte uses are transformed. In reverse to the Kafkaesque metamorphosis, in this case it is the insects that are becoming humanized: their legs are turned so that they articulate in reverse to their species; that is: in the manner of humans. And they have added little feet, very plausible. These mutations, at the same time that they make them more human, make them more monstrous.

In Harte's work there is a laboratory gaze, not only on insects but also on humans. And a work that goes back and forth from the insectization of the human to the humanization of insects.

Here is transcribed part of the interview conducted with the artist at the gallery.

—In the sheet given to visitors to the exhibition, a fragment from the novel The Life of Insects by the Russian cult writer Viktor Pelevin is quoted.

—The exhibition is called La Salida (The Exit), but it could also be "The Entrance." They are sometimes reversible concepts, taken from the work of Victor Pelevin, an author I had already used in a previous exhibition, in 2008. In that book the insects are mutating and living human lives. For example, they are smoking; or suddenly a giant footstep comes to crush them. Or a piece of gum that was stuck to the sole of a shoe passes almost over them and sticks to their side. Once you enter that world, the insects become familiar.

—When did you start including insects in your work?

—In 1992. And shortly after I started collecting them. I became friends with an entomologist, Javier Muzón, an authority in his field, professor in La Plata, who taught me to collect. He gave me collections of insects that his students had discarded. Since then I see insects differently. I realize that they look at me; how they interact, how they react. Insects pass by, look at you and continue. You see them and they see you.

—Did you capture them?

—Yes. And then I had to put them in a little envelope. The next step is to inject them with acetone. I collected and worked a lot with dragonflies. I really liked the wings, their shapes, the hardness, the enormous eyes, the antennae, the hairs, the head and the mouth apparatus, the abdomen, the colors... by observing them you get to know them. It affected me to kill them, to inject them. Because one establishes a kind of relationship with insects.

In 2004, Javier, together with a disciple, published an article in Science magazine in which he presents a discovery: a dragonfly that presents a difference in its sexual apparatus. So in homage to my interest, he baptized it with the name Acanthagrion Hartei.

—Insects interest you in relation to the human.

—Yes. And with the possibility of seeing ourselves associated with other forms of life. These are interests that go along with other questions, perhaps of an existential type, such as when one asks oneself who am I, how do I work. Or one also asks about memory, memories... and as time passes we undergo important changes. With the passage of time we are different, we transform, we question what we have learned; what we believed about things changes; what was useful for something now serves for something else; or it doesn't serve.

The insects in my work have something monstrous, but also something pitiful. And I think they also put the human in question. I place insects in familiar scenes.

—There are also scenes from "B-series" movies or references to certain mythologies.

—That work I did in the nineties, in which there is a dissected fly to which I had grafted a self-portrait with my head, took as reference the movie The Fly, the first version. And on the other hand, the beetle is the sacred animal of the ancient Egyptians.

—Each work seems to be the effect of a narration. And at the same time there is always something disruptive.

—I force insects to be part of a human scene. But I also feel that I narrate even when I am sanding, or in the simplest and most abstract attitude. As for the disruptive... the same thing happens with the human: You never know, there can always be an irruption of something else.

* At Big Sur gallery, Carlos Calvo 637, until the end of January.