

Instruction in a circle
• Rodrigo Arteaga in Sobering Gallery •

Homo omnium rerum mensura est
Man is the measure of all things
Protagoras

The Encyclopedia became one of the largest repositories for human knowledge including all created measures that enabled its apprehension: botany, mathematics, geometry, philosophy, arts, astronomy, geography, etc. We made great efforts to classify the world around us, thinking that when we had all the answers then we would know ourselves, since we were the point of reference for all things. But soon we realized that the world was not static and immutable, but an infinite and ever changing place, with which the standards –the measurable and the explainable- did not represent *all of the world* but only a minimal fraction of it. This transcendent fact has driven man for many centuries to empty the inventory of our own invention. This objectivity gave us an apparent control over nature, but also hardened and fractured our perception of the world.

In order to reconstruct this inventory with a new model for knowledge, the work of Rodrigo Arteaga leads us to forget these old measures to be able to imagine the infinity of relations produced between the different objects and forms that surround us. In this exhibition they affect one another, making it difficult to sustain a unique narrative, manifesting the fragility of encyclopedic lesson and also of empiric understanding. Taking the original meaning from Encyclopedia as *Instruction in a circle* the works are aimed onto a system in which the cyclical nature of the universe compels us to be constantly re-establishing the parameters of the representation of things and of ourselves, including that which doesn't even exist or that is immeasurable.

The *Encyclopedic Drawings* series (50 graphite drawings on paper), reinterprets various visual representations of the world from the optics of different sciences like biology, cartography, anatomy, botany, astronomy. The artist is particularly interested in the spaces left by representation, as in how a drawing of a plant does not allow us to know if it has been created from imagination, from direct observation or from another image that represents it. There are drawings made from objects, installations, collages, books, and illustrations, all simultaneously installed as a large map of knowledge. Something similar occurs in *Herbarium of Botanical Studies*, arranged in the manner of a Natural History Museum, this work presents a group of species but in which nature isn't actually there, instead it is represented in cut-out illustrations from botany books. It is interesting to think that the botanist studies plants in nature or in the laboratory and, from its three-dimensionality, brings it to paper to be able to disclose the acquired knowledge towards others that might be interested in a practical manner. In this case the artist takes these illustrations to turn them onto their original three-dimensionality, pointing out the fragility of knowledge and its certainties.

In the complex human attempt to measure the world, sometimes what is new today, tomorrow will be no more; so it is that some still legitimate ancient knowledge is dismissed by the need of something more recent. Maybe we mistrust time (our own measure). Let us bear in mind that the books used by the artist are mostly out-dated, the information in them is no longer useful or certain. Knowledge has its own cycles in a similar way to nature. The piece *Autumn in Spring* is, like its title suggests, a contradiction on nature itself, a temporary leap. The leaves from the Chilean Autumn have been scanned and printed on paper, installed as a pile of leaves on the floor, as if they were swept during Paris's Spring. A wink of mislead, that is to be found in many of the exhibition's works. The ~~shared~~ materiality of almost every one of the works is paper, as in a search for exploring the sculptural potential of the printed image and of life existing in all matter. A skeleton of a leaf in *Botanical Scope*, circuits of road maps that resemble the human body's arterial system in *Ramifications*, and *The Earth*, the only work in which life manifests in a perceivable way –from a halfway closed book live plants emerge-. Finally the work *Globe* gives us the chance of having, at last, the world in our hands.

We are the *ouroboric* snake of analysis eating its own tail over and over again. In the position of man as the measure of all things, the idea that man by trying to apprehend reality only restricts it is implied. To measure the world is to reduce it and also to make it less significant. We are unaware of the part of the universe we occupy until we see earth in one of the images that in an on-going zoom-out leaves us floating in an infinite space. Things never completely disappear, they just timelessly change.

Carolina Castro Jorquera
Curator