

Adrián Villar Rojas

(Rosario, Argentina, 1980)

With the spirit of an archaeologist of the future, Adrián Villar Rojas creates installations of monumental dimensions which have all the charm of ancient ruins. The sculptures, created on the basis of a blend of raw clay and cement and often designed to be used outdoors, undergo the effect of the passing of time and the weathering of the elements, which produce cracks, fractures and uneven surfaces. The frequent inclusion of organic material that changes appearance or decomposes allows the work to alter over the long term. The public arrives midway through the process of decay and is faced with a complex temporality which intersects the past of creation, a science-fictional future and a present of a fragile nature. These works are findings dug up at the end of human civilisation and of its art. Wondering what the Earth might look like to the eyes of an alien creature, Villar Rojas finds his answers in the principle of horizontality, which makes it impossible to tell the common object from the artistic. In this post-apocalyptic world, there are no longer hierarchies or scales of value, which disappeared along with mankind, but just hybrid testimonies of the past.

Supported by a studio that he manages as director of his touring theatre company, Villar Rojas has always preferred a collaborative approach. His staff, made up of various professional figures – artists, technicians and craftsmen – move with him from one part of the world to another to pursue new projects, which are always the result of a deep reflection on space. The importance of the context is so central to his practice that long stays at the hosting institution are often necessary, often along with major structural interventions on the exhibition environment, such as the concealment of service elements or the elimination of artificial lighting.

Created in the open air in a wood in Patagonia, *Mi familia muerta* (2009) is the first large-size sculpture that forced him to come face to face with the ephemeral duration of his works. This gigantic whale, almost thirty metres long, with a wooden frame covered in raw clay which crumbles before the eyes of the powerless artist, convinced him not to intervene to block the process but indeed to incorporate it into the work. The particular sculptures of *Return the World*, exposed for a hundred days in the sun and rain of Kassel in 2012, underline the predominance of the forces of nature over the will of man and his instinct to seal works off within a museum. Instead, the great glass fibre animals of *The Most Beautiful of All Mothers* (the installation produced for the 2015 Istanbul Biennale) emerge from the salty waters of the Marmara Sea and undergo its effects. The sculptures, like the exemplar of the hippopotamus in the collection, stand atop huge plinths with a load of organic and inorganic material on their backs, in front of the house where Lev Trotsky spent part of his exile, of which they seem to embody the fantasies and nightmares of his long-lost revolutionary dreams.

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