

Doris Salcedo

(Bogotá, 1958)

One of Doris Salcedo's first series of works, created in the late 1980s and entitled *Atrabiliarios* (*Defiant*), emerges from the experience of people who have disappeared, where everything is impregnated with a feeling of loss and, as the artist has said, absence becomes more physical and pervasive than their past presence. Shoes, worn out by use, curve over the space left by the body that has ceased to wear them. Salcedo wraps them in a cocoon of animal skin, sewn with surgical thread, which takes on the amber color of aged membranes seen in museums of ethnography and natural science. They are deserted and closed off spaces, which preserve a void dense with desperate nostalgia.

The work in the collection, belongs to a subsequent series that began with *La Casa Viuda I* (*Widow's House I*), 1992, where a wooden chair forms a single body with an exaggeratedly vertical door. The frayed weave of a piece of white embroidered fabric, which seems indelibly marked with the dreams and lost expectations that once rested in the couple's trousseau, joins with the worn fibers of the wood. It is a process of metamorphosis where a body disappears, sinking into the objects, but leaves behind a trace of fabric that remains entangled on the surface.

In *Untitled*, it is not the light breath of a garment that marks the passage from presence to absence, but rather the dull solidity of the cement that blocks the space of vibration and life around the chair. The object has fallen into a silence without cracks or fissures, a silence that incorporates the wooden structure until it erases some of its parts. In works from the same series, not only individual elements sink into the cement, but entire groups of furniture, submerged one into the other, reciprocally drawn to the opaque material that constitutes the loss that inhabits them: chairs become incorporated into wardrobes, wardrobes become monumental wooden headboards. Some chests of drawers now reveal only the outline of their compartments and the closure of the cement seems shaped by precise cuts, as if the furniture we are seeing were in the midst of a lost whole. (EV)