

... about a 'space understood as a research system which transmits knowledge through schemes often parallel to reason'

[excerpts from a dialogue between artist Laura Buttons and Nicolás Lamas]

Laura Buttons: What is the nature of your relationship with sports?

Nicolás Lamas: Actually, I am more interested in the idea of playing as a regulated activity. In a way, I use elements associated with gambling by analogy with the structures and behaviors within a social network. I see the game as a simulation of what could happen in action areas external to sports, where different bodies interact with each other and are determined by objectives, rules, skills, and physical laws defining the limits of their possibilities. However, the objects associated with sports or gambling also serve me as tools to analyze everyday objects. Objects have a specific value and, through processing, acquire characteristics that activate different types of relationships with things. Any transformation implies a questioning of perception and emphasizes the relativity of values and meanings of things, often considered immutable, indisputable. On the other hand, I like the idea of being able to establish a more playful relationship with objects – it allows me to find other types of interaction outside the reason, where the poetic condition of certain relationships provides ways to interpret a changing and building reality.

LB: Why do you use sports equipment? What can you tell me about your pieces made from sports materials?

NL: The use of some sports materials in my work has greatly increased in recent years. I'm not working specifically with a medium or a material. What interests me is the versatility and the ability to integrate new readings. I always keep the possibility of including new materials or new strategies open and incorporate new fields of reference and reflection in my research. Last year, I started to integrate sports or game-associated elements in some projects to establish conceptual links with the idea of chance, probability, matter, time and space via predefined rules.

LB: What is your philosophy about shapes and objects?

NL: I'm quite curious why certain things have specific shapes and properties. Whether by decision, or by something that depends on chance, there is a constant transformation of the physical world on many levels. I'm obsessed by the relativity of things and by how everything seems to foster relationships according to different parameters, which usually cannot be perceived. I constantly think about how a dynamic chain of cause and effect permeates all aspects of reality. I am interested in the potentiality of things, this latent state where an object can be anything and loses its essence, its meaning, its value. In the symbolic, psychological, cultural, or economic value assigned to specific objects, and in how these values are relative to their state of transformation. How do we think and interact with these objects we constantly perceive and believe we know? How knowledge, faith, or superstition, determine the degree of respect and empathy towards certain things? What happens when an object loses the form which determines what it is? However, it is not always enough to change the formal structure of an object in order to acquire another relationship with the world, but it is funny how often and how naturally we use objects for various purposes different from those they've been created for.

LB: Sports materials are designed for bodies which seem omitted when objects lose their function, when they enter the field of art. Did the body just vanish? How do you deal with it?

N.L. : The idea of the body is very important in my work, but I'm not interested in the body as a physical presence or a protagonist, but as an agent. The absence of the body, or the body as absence, is essential in my work, but I put much more emphasis on the action and on the process than on the body itself. Materials become the support where the body leaves traces through different actions. Touching, rubbing, scratching, pressing, breaking, or any other action our bodies may exercise determines a constant change in the matter.

LB: How do you envision the exhibition space? Do you consider it while thinking about your pieces? Does it become part of the process?

NL: The space is also the work. It is as important as the artworks it contains. I like to see the exhibition space as a working area, a studio, a common ground where ideas and meanings become more potent while interacting with each other. A large part of my projects is determined at the time of installation. This is when I manage and negotiate the space according to ideas and selected works - it is usually the most intense and exciting phase in the workflow. The set-up days are requiring a great deal of concentration; all my attention is focused on decision making, while leaving open the option to include or exclude some ideas. Finally, I like to confront myself with untreated issues during the process. I think I work better under pressure, taking problems as challenges and trying to find the best way to solve them. I see the works more like exercises, opportunities, or comments with a critical position on specific questions I ask myself in my work. Some works may interest the public more than the others, of course, but more important is that they are seen as a coherent whole, and not as disjointed pieces. Ultimately, the most important thing is the relationship between ideas, shapes, materials, and the space understood as a research system which transmits knowledge through schemes often parallel to reason.

LB: How does geometry take place in your aesthetic system? What are you trying to figure out?

NL: I have always been interested in geometry. I've noticed that geometry behaves as a kind of alphabet, which can describe reality as a perfect construction, pure, measurable. Although geometry has undoubtedly aesthetic and symbolic value deeply rooted in almost every culture, it does not interest me to emphasize this in my work, but to look for its conceptual meaning and to use it as a method for analyzing the space. I think of geometry as a resource that incorporates an idealized conception of reality. Undoubtedly, geometry has been used throughout history as a way to give shape and order, as a mathematical drawing of the reality it attempts to decode. But I am particularly interested in the transformation of Euclidean geometry paradigms and in how they enable new possibilities for understanding and measuring the world.

LB: Some of your works have somehow connected sports and geometry. I am referring to the idea of measure. What is your relationship with it?

NL: Since childhood, I've been invariably attracted by measuring instruments. I see these tools as extensions of our senses, of our bodies, which may help us gain information about the world and facilitate our access to the hidden levels of reality. But, moreover, I like to question our trust in these devices or precision instruments used to obtain data. In fact, what I try to analyze is the

relativity of the result, the margin of error. I seek neither the accuracy, nor the certainty, but quite the opposite: that which is rejected, the miscalculation.

LB: You use a lot the materiality of the stone. What role does it play in your philosophy? Does it embody strength?

NL: Well, the truth is that I am using rocks, stones, or minerals in general for several reasons. Among others, for the symbolic charge they convey, their physicality, their inertia, and their steadfastness. On the other hand, despite their hardness, they are in a process of progressive transformation, may disintegrate into fragments, which, in turn, may break up into smaller stones and end up dust. The stone has always been part of something bigger and will continue its eternal flow that extends in time and space, making room for other independent but related objects. A stone could be null, or part of a priceless cultural heritage. A stone can be a reference point, a weight, a weapon, an object of study, a tool, a work surface, a fragment, an object of veneration, or just a stone, invisible, seemingly invisible, something that turns into complete "nothing", but retains its intrinsic potential of becoming "something". Ultimately, the stone is the most basic representation - but at the same time powerful - of the matter, the thing, the object, the entity which is struggling to persist.

LB: Your works seem built upon tensions. Do you think that playing with the 'inner strength' of the matter is a constituent element of your sculpture?

NL: Yes. Many of my works comprise these tensions in different ways. The dialectical method proposed by philosophy interests me very much. I fancy the idea of a discussion marked by constant tension between contraries, so that any result is determined by the equilibrium amid opposing forces. This is something we can find in all that I've tried to explain here. To some extent, this clash between opposites creates new ways for reading my work. Things can turn when confronted with unforeseen situations. Errors, accidents, exceptions, or chance play very important roles in my work and in the way I'm deciphering things. Often, when I have nothing to do, I just watch and discover cracks that develop between the controlled reality and these other possible worlds that seep into this context in order to reveal more ways to interact with things which do not fit our logic and refuse to be defined.