

## **Yovanovich's Solitudes / José Antonio Rodríguez**

Solitudes, no doubt, but also appeals uttered in a void; the fragility of broken lives now exposed; private nightmares eternally recurring as the images pass before our eyes; continual darkness in which are submerged and from which emerge these lacerated-enlarged-cornered-bare female silhouettes. And the masks of savaged faces, transformed into the ghostly corpse that rises out of this dark world of changing images, lengthened like the shadows of the individuals it depicts. This is *Soledades Sonoras* (Resonant Solitudes), the latest exhibition/installation/confrontation/lamentation by Vida Yovanovich, one of our documentary photographers who is permanently trying to escape the limitations of the traditional documentary photography exhibition space (good riddance frame, good riddance walls—welcome the expansion of the frame to fit the setting of the entire gallery). Now creating individual microcosms that literally fall to pieces like the lives they represent. Here are our private terrors, confined to gloom.

Unlike contemporaries of hers who still see the photographic document as inviolable, meaning unalterable (no retouching, be objective, no editing!), Yovanovich transcends the schematics of the framed photograph, transforming the latter into images displayed under a new format. We could foresee much of this process in her exhibition *Vida Yovanovich, fotografías* (Galería Kin, 1993), where, in medium-format photomontages, she began creating these spaces that allude to persistent loneliness, where the figures depicted were not much more than fleeting presences on the verge of vanishing, something that, ten years later, she has taken to its most refined expression; or the sad, bleak farewell song she composed with *Gastado el Tiempo* (Spent Time, Centro de la Imagen, 1998), a suggestive installation piece evoking death, where the viewer reconnoitered the solitary life of an elderly woman, a cold circle of emptiness that visitors had always to exit through the same entrance they had used to get in; or the book-summation entitled *Cárcel de los Sueños* (Prison of Dreams, Casa de la Imágenes-FONCA, 1997), in which old age is wasted away in distressing, ghostly effigies of decrepitude. Utter solitude.

A staunch defender of lost battles (against time, against death, against prison injustice), Yovanovich has created with her work a fresco of pain, inhabited by all those beings who may have seen better days in the past, but who are now shut-in, either by choice or by force. In this sense, *Soledades Sonoras* is a document exposing inner suffering. Exposing these isolated bodies, women's bodies turned into shadows, barely

insinuated, ghosts with voices that tell us from inside the prison their doleful stories (“I found the two of them making love in my bed... so I stabbed the girl a couple of times, and they ran for it... I then, never saw my children again”), or their muted passions (“I’m pretty special in bed... the guys I sleep with come back for more”), or their lost loves (“he was asleep when I did it... I don’t know if I’d do it again... but what’s done is done... I lost control... it’s awful having a death on your conscience...”), or their distress (“yes I used to beat her, but it was for her own good, not mine”).

Images projected on both sides that make everything seem to fall to pieces; projections in keeping with the participants’ distress; fleeting bodies that reappear and disappear again in a setting of profound blackness; blurry outlines of bodies that are merely that, nothing but shadows; pleading hands that cross the images like the viewers themselves who become gloomy silhouettes, participants in the enveloping darkness, the gray luminosities. Absolute, confused loneliness, eternally recurring.

(Vida Yovanovich. *Soledades Sonoras*, Centro de la Imagen, Plaza de la Ciudadela 2, Mexico City.)

RODRÍGUEZ, José Antonio. “Las soledades de Yovanovich” *El Financiero*, January 27, 2005, p. 39.