

A Punta de Sangre

ERIKA DIETTES

There are places in our geography where animals which embodied the Death are nowadays symbols of sad hope. In many Colombian locations victims of enforced disappearances flow into rivers which represent life and our national heritage. At times, while the corpses float down near the banks, people arrive there because of black vultures' siege. These creatures become allies, at the right moment, flying around a corpse when it appears. Hope that mourners feel before the black birds' presence is an ambiguous feeling because those who wait their relatives return sometimes prefer the fatal news to the uncertainty. After identifying who the victim is, people would have preferred not to know it. "Birds of ill omen."

A punta de sangre (*By the force of the bloodshed*) is a work that makes ourselves realize the anachronistic national coat of arms in which only the black vulture has the privilege of perching on the land of fertility, richness and a lost canal. This bird has the unfortunate fate of being the carrier of obituaries and the personification of the Death in a country where crime becomes part of its daily reality.

With her work, Erika Diettes brings us closer to a drama where most of us live as distant spectators –daily news about missing people. Although it doesn't come as a new issue from the artists' perspective, in Diettes' world there was a preliminary research which brought her closer to the conflict and its victims. She listens to the survivors like the other version of the events. However, that version of what happened is not part of the news but a short note before entertainment gossips section. Indifference of common people generated by these pseudo-journalistic approaches gives reasons to this artist to make this real situation evident, which can only be reported in reverse order. If the cries for help, as always, aim at the centre of the country begging for Government aid then crying from inside, from the historic landmark that symbolizes the power of the Nation, is making an allusion to its history. Colombia has been built itself by the force of their people's bloodshed, and denying the facts has been our defense mechanism to survive. For convenience we are gullible whenever we want voluntarily to believe or ignore our history.

Although Erika Diettes' photographs are full of complaints, they remain as pictures. A woman's bereaved face and its counterpart –an expressionless black vulture's face, watch the river like waiting by different reasons, but pursuing the same purpose. Diettes' images have a dark aura of mourning. They change us into a large group of spectators obligated to see an event where three faces strive for getting us momentarily out of our own indifference from the diversity of Bolivar Square –the place where our history began to be written.

Christian Padilla

Researcher and Art Historian

Premio Nacional de Ensayo de Historia de Arte Colombiano 2007