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Jorge Tacla, Signal of abandonment 38, 2019, oil and cold wax on canvas, 124.4 x 180.6 cm. Courtesy Tacla Studio and Cristin Tierney Gallery © Jorge Tacla

Articles

JORGE TACLA: DAMAGE CONTROL

By Matías Celedón

There is an image that remains in the way that **Jorge Tacla** paints landscapes in destruction. Sometimes it can be perfectly hidden, but it refers in different dimensions to a decisive moment of his stay in the Atacama desert in 1989, when he traveled to Chile promoted by the Guggenheim grant. Abandoned to the solitude of his inner world, after days of walking and sitting to observe the driest place on the planet, it seemed evident that nothing changed in this desolate landscape: there was nothing but the wind, space and the sun. Except for his papers, which were burning, he was in a kind of place alien to time, apparently imperturbable, until one day a military plane passed by, flying over his head at full speed; a low roar patrolling the border.

“At that moment, my idea of space changed because I realized that there were all these things that I couldn't see. What appeared to be empty space was, in fact, filled with lines

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and directions and other information. Those are the footprints of technology. You cannot touch or see the direction of these lines ”, says Tacla in a conversation with Joseph Ruzicka



Jorge Tacla,
Signal of abandonment 24, 2017, oil and cold wax on canvas, 181.6 x 124.5 cm.
Arancibia Isla Collection © Jorge Tacla

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The scope of this image reverberates in the different works exhibited in *Natural History of Destruction*, in the **Il Posto room**. The paintings and the record gathered here show the impact of this awareness on the artist's outstanding career. Belonging to his iconic series - *Sign of Abandonment*, *Hidden Identities*, *Anatomy of Dyslexia* and *Rubble*-, these works make visible the different stages of an incessant search around the representation of space, but not its physical dimension, if not its sense of transformation. Each one, in its own way, keeps the same common thread implicit. In one of his notebooks, Elias Canetti points out: "The credibility of memory obtained by what we exclude from it." How to represent the lines that converge in that space, the process of ongoing relationships associated with that tragedy?

In *On the Natural History of Destruction*, the German writer WG Sebald tries to understand "the way in which individual, collective and cultural memory deal with experiences that go beyond the limits of what is bearable". In the first of the Zurich lectures on "Air Warfare and Literature" brought together in the book that inspires the title of this exhibition, Sebald points to a sinister aspect of amnesia with an epigraph from Stanislaw Lem: "The Elimination Trick is the defensive reflex of any expert". Conversing with Jorge Tacla for the catalog of this exhibition, the artist depicted the tragedy of total annihilation with the firepower of the aerial missiles that attacked Lebanon in 1996 - and which gave rise to his series *Rubble*.

"Ruin is the state of memory. The only place we can hold onto is history. We walk on contemporary ruins, of which it is necessary to leave certain records and antecedents".

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Jorge Tacla, Signal of abandonment 29, 2018, oil and cold wax on canvas, 152.5 x 152.5 cm. Courtesy Tacla Studio and Cristin Tierney Gallery © Jorge Tacla

The destruction of these aerial missiles, capable of making not only the building but also its rubble disappear (“the record of ruin”), vindicates a strategy of historical domination through suppression, denial and silencing. That extreme drive, also present in the violent image of the *tabula rasa* colonizing as in the burning of books or the forced disappearance of people, it represents the wildest and most devastating manifestation of the antagonism between memory and forgetting, and makes our history “a sequence of unlikely images that distort and superimpose reality on it. and combining in the strangest ways”, as Arturo Uslar Pietri points out. The ruins with which we live, not only constitute the rubble and material remnants of the past; they constitute, above all, the testimony of the losses associated with that disappearance. In addition, they force us to

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grapple with a series of conflicting rubble, the immaterial rust of decaying political institutions, defeated ideological structures, and archaic biases that remain, despite the accelerated degradation of the present.

“I think the ambition for power has been so maddening that it is making us see destruction day by day. And in that destruction, internal biology appears, where human activity is, that which is not seen when the complete facade is in place”.

After the impact, the structure becomes permeable and the complexity of the interior appears. Placed in the perspective of a missile plane, Tacla pierces the façade to evoke the echoes and ghosts that inhabit the intramural walls. We sense its presence in the forms. In both *Biomechanism* (1996) and *Rubble 19* (2010), dust is seen in pigments.

In *Paso por ti* (2006), the artist records the metallic remains of the Twin Towers, the surviving image of a tower of Babel –which also evokes Vladimir Tatlin's monument to the Third International, also known as the Monument for the Liberation of the Humanity, which seems like an irony of history -, as if its collapse was foreshadowed in its cast foundations and foundations.

“One used to see the marvelous totems with their glasses. Inside was an internal biology and that's what was left in the end. Not that great power that is the facade of things. We walked on the place where the humans had their activities”.

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Jorge Tacla, *Biomechanism*, 1996, acrylic and oil on canvas, 208.3 x 157.5 cm. Solari del Sol Collection © Jorge Tacla

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Jorge Tacla, *Rubble 19*, 2010, acrylic, oil and marble dust on canvas, 154.9 x 167.6 cm.
Solari del Sol Collection © Jorge Tacla

In Tacla's paintings, mind and matter get confused over and over again. The residues of these frictions are a quarry of information to which he goes with the rigor of a forensic archaeologist. "The surface of the earth and the products of the mind can disintegrate and disperse in specific regions of art," argues Robert Smithson. His reflections on the landscape and industrial ruins are illuminating in understanding the disconcerting forms that create the relationships between space and the properties of the materials with which Tacla meticulously works on each work. "Our mind and the land are in a constant state of erosion. Mental rivers wear down abstract shores, brain waves undermine ridges of thought, *A sedimentation of the mind: earthly projects*.

Tacla talks about sites *in Destruction*. It is not about monumental ruins or relics evocative of a present memory, although petrified, but about the perpetual transformation of a moment after the noise, the image that follows the breaking point that originates it: "The

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pictorial solution would not make any sense if it did not it was because you are really looking for something that has some particular depth ”.

The aerial image over the desert marks a trajectory in space that describes an extreme evasion maneuver. In *Imaginary Horizon, Chandela (1990)* , the artist alludes to an emergency turn within a minimum turning radius that allows the pursued aircraft to remain in a pursuit position. An effective maneuver in his *Abandon Signal* series, where the gesture in the face of the lost no longer focuses on destruction, on the rubble and its exposed biomechanisms, but on preserving and preserving what remains, the intimacy of a latent space or the memory of an absence that slowly fades. "All ancient language is immediately compromised, and all language becomes ancient from the moment it is repeated," writes Roland Barthes, for whom, even then, the only way to escape alienation from society was through flight into ahead.

“It is not because of the destruction, it is because of the abandonment that we have for that space. Contrary to what I do with other things, it is a manifestation of passion and love towards those institutions and those libraries like Trinity College, in Dublin, which have still been able to keep the books. If we think of the New York Public Library, the best books, the most valuable, are in the subways, where there is no access. They take care of them so that people do not take them and do not deteriorate ”.

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Jorge Tacla, *Paso por ti*, 2006, oil on canvas, 178 x 150 cm. Solari del Sol Collection © Jorge Tacla

One of the problems of capitalism is that it destroys the human possibilities it creates. People can develop, but in restricted and distorted ways. Investigating the psychology of destruction, Tacla has also tried a series of buildings that consolidate the architectural representation of power. Undermining their facades, exposing their insides, "it took away their physical strength, it weakened them." In an exemplary way, in *Hidden*

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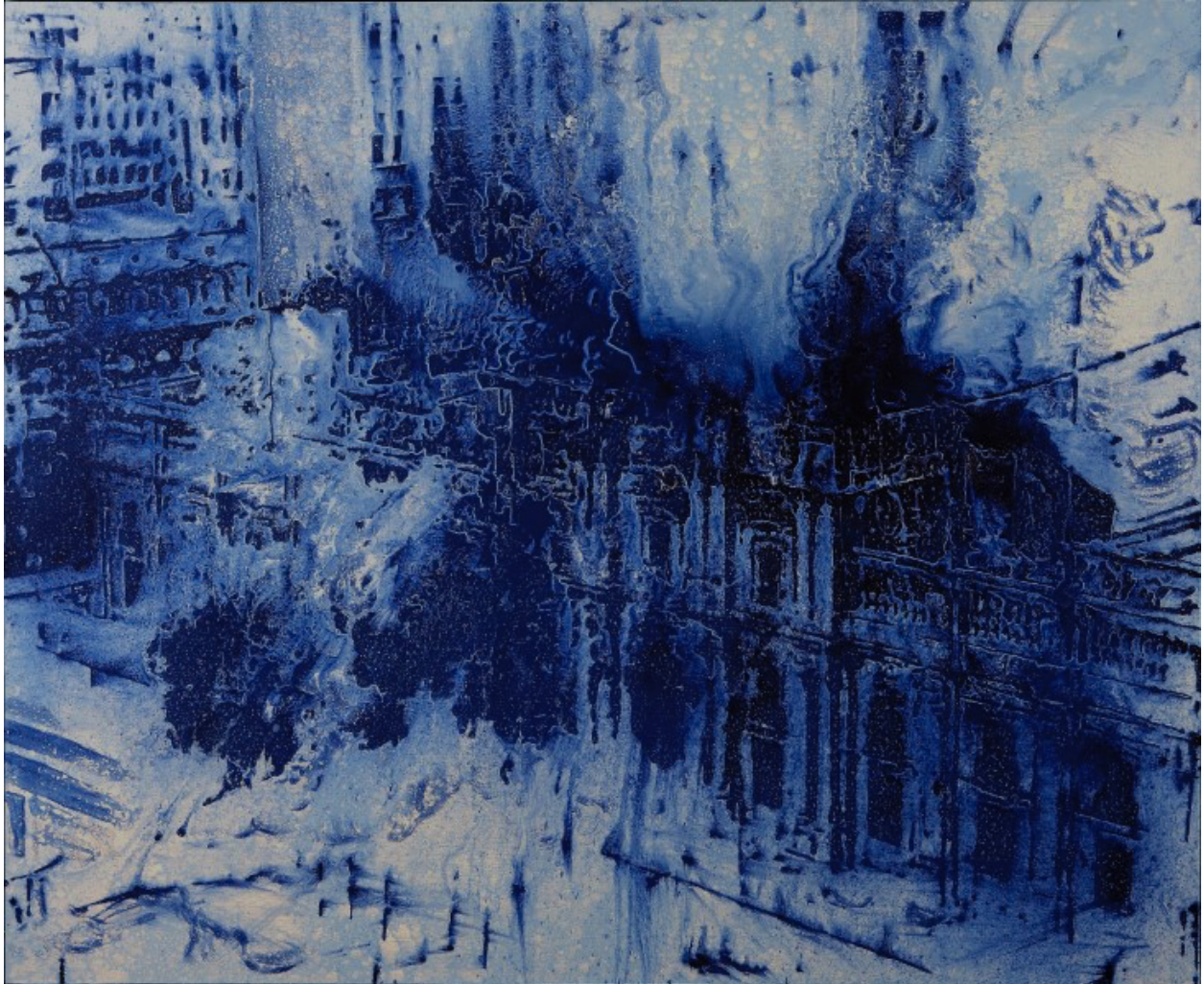
Identity 25, the concrete imprint of the territory is projected on the matter of memory. The emblematic image of La Moneda bombardada - the bluish stain of the abrasive fire, the contours of the fabric on fire - seems inflamed by a subliminal geography of aerial landscapes, coastal borders, translucent layers where the territory seems to be seen from the air in different perspectives. and scales.

"The aerial nature of sound, and by extension of music, always implies some degree of insubstantiality and uncertainty, some potential for illusion or disappointment, some ambiguity between presence and absence, full and empty, enchantment and transgression," writes David Toop. There is a world of sound inside mute things. In the desert, the monotony was first broken with a noise. When looking at Jorge Tacla's work, I think that his studies at the Santiago Conservatory and his past as a percussionist are essential to understand the movements and oscillations that distort the surface of his paintings. At times, it is as if the lines were reflected in a layer of water or registered the vibration of strings that prevent the landscape from being fixed in perspective. Facing the silence of the unspoken, it always seems to be working on another intensity, secretly tuning into another silence, the silence of the unspeakable. In Jorge Tacla's paintings, there is always a background noise, a certain wavelength that seems to tune with that deafening storm, the accelerated sound of destruction.

"From the most intimate place to the most global, the relationship between victim and aggressor is a common thread in my work. The room of a family home, where a couple lives; that room can also be a place of rubble. Family conflicts can become very violent and are testimony to how brutal intimacy can be".

In most of these paintings there are no bodies. If there are organic forms, they arise from abstract lines, they are evoked by some indistinguishable contour between what remains. In his essay, Sebald tries to understand the fundamental reasons for the inability of a whole generation of German writers to describe and recall the experience of unprecedented annihilation. In the *Injury Report* video The ashes and the record of the burned evidence - archives, clinical reports, personal notebooks - are the only things that are preserved from the political history of the artist's past. "When the fissures between body and mind multiply into endless gaps, the shop begins to crumble and eventually collapses like the Usher House," observed Smithson. Every transfer leaves a mark and suffers a loss in transit. Signs of life where there is no one. Located in the interstices of a world that disappears, Tacla manages to capture the echoes and vestiges of humanity that will survive.

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Jorge Tacla, *Hidden Identity 25*, 2013, oil and marble dust on canvas, 162.5 x 198.1 cm.
Solari del Sol Collection © Jorge Tacla

The exhibition *Natural History of Destruction*, by Jorge Tacla, can be visited at the [Il Posto](#) art space with prior [registration](#) at the following times: Thursday from 3 to 6 pm; Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Espoz 3150 floor -1, Santiago de Chile.