

Doing Time/Depth of Surface

During the summer of 2011, Philagrafika invited Spanish artists Patricia Gómez and María Jesús González for a residency-based project in Philadelphia, the results of which are on view at The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design. The artists' radical understanding of the print resonated with Philagrafika's avowed mission of expanding the conceptual and technical frontiers of printmaking. The idea was to do a large project at Holmesburg Prison, based on previous experiences the artists had while working in prisons in Valencia and Palma de Mallorca in Spain. Their process consists of taking imprints of the walls of the cells with a technique called strappo, commonly used in restoration, whereby a piece of fabric is adhered to the surface of a wall and subsequently removed, peeling away the outer layers, which become a monoprint. As the artists have stated,

"For us the term 'print' is more conceptual than purely procedural because in terms of material and technique, strappo is related with the restoration of murals. Experimentation with technique has allowed us to expand the concept of printmaking, resulting in a type of work that, besides its artistic or formal values, has a value as a document, as an archive for memory."

The artists worked in Philadelphia for several months doing research in local archives and working onsite at the prison. This extended time enabled them to further delve into the complexities of their theme and glean information from local institutions.

This exhibition presents several works generated from their residency. The main piece consists of the entire inner surface of two cells, one measuring 59 feet in length, the other nearly 30 feet, and shown on the floor as a sculptural object that brings to mind a crumpled shroud. There are also discreet drawings done by the inmates on the walls, peeled away with a gauze-like fabric. These smaller prints reflect the layers that time creates inside of lived spaces, the skin of architecture as it were, always imbued with history. The artists also conceived a sound piece based on the log books of the former prison guards, who had to report on conditions in their respective wards every fifteen minutes. Most of the log entries are literally the same phrase, "all appears normal" written hundreds of times, suggesting that the guard's confinement was symmetrical to that of the inmates'.

Print has always been a medium that enables reproduction. But we often tend to forget that the matrix is also a means to record information, a type of archive. Gómez + González are clear in this respect: "We are interested in capturing the effects of time or of the people on the walls of a place that is disappearing, and it is almost magical how a space is recorded, as it were, on a soft surface like fabric or paper. And with this change of support, from wall to fabric, the resulting print becomes, almost inevitably, a physical archive of the place."

José Roca, curator.

The Doing Time / Depth of Surface artist residency and exhibition at The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design is a project of Philagrafika, a nonprofit arts organization in Philadelphia that provides leadership for large-scale, collaborative initiatives with broad public exposure for the field of printmaking. *Doing Time / Depth of Surface* has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative and in collaboration with SPANISH CULTURAL ACTION, AC/E. Exhibition support was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional project support was provided by the Haverford Hurford Humanities Center Internship Program and Crane Arts.

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