

## An archaeologist's embrace

In 2002 (20 years ago now!), I happened to come across the Augusto Ferrari exhibition at the Centro Cultural Recoleta. Like many people, the first thing that surprised me was to learn that León Ferrari's father was a painter and architect of churches, but there was a bigger surprise, which was to learn about the existence of panoramas, because Augusto Ferrari was also a painter of panoramas. Panoramas are large paintings (often more than 100 meters long by 10 meters high), which are hung in a circular shape in buildings built specifically for their assembly and visualization, generating an immersive 360-degree space. They are illuminated and sometimes have live music. They were a popular meeting place for the arts between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until the advent of cinema.

Getting to know Ferrari's panoramas was for me like finding a root of the forms we were exploring through live drawing and scenic art. Those huge paintings were in themselves a living scene that people walked through. Another thing that caught my attention was how some media of the time referred pejoratively to this practice for taking painting to popular places. I also found in that aspect a familiarity with the research on live drawing and collective drawing, in relation to the democratization of artistic practices and their reappropriation by the communities.

Years later I took Augusto Ferrari's panoramas as a historical reference in the university equivalency thesis I did at UNA, "Dibujar un Aleph" (Drawing an Aleph). At that time Paloma, Augusto's great-granddaughter, told me that to know more about him I had to talk to his daughter, Susana. Thus began the years of dialogue with Susana, long meetings, exchanges by email and later by audio messages (Susana with her more than ninety years adapts fluently to each new device).

After the thesis, during which we talked about panoramas as a historical reference for contemporary works, the idea of a project to recreate and intervene them came up. The panorama chosen for this project was "Messina distrutta", which always became the protagonist of our discussions because of the shared fascination it caused us.

The Open Panorama project arose, in part, from the desire to digitally mount that panorama that was never shown in Argentina, despite the fact that he traveled with the Ferrari family for that purpose, when they moved to the country from Italy in 1914. But also because of the desire to intervene the panorama and invite other artists to do so, how to dialogue through live drawing with a reference work of the same? Since my work method integrates the production of works and their activation through artistic education actions, it was important to me that its opening included participatory activities, in which the process was shared and opened up, in order to

provide feedback for the next stage of the project. In this way, the project became a work of mediation in itself.

To the question, why did I choose the Messina panorama? The first answer is that it is simply because it is a visual marvel. But when we delve deeper into the reasons for the choice, a very particular theme emerges. Panoramas usually portrayed battles, but Messina tells the story of the day after an earthquake and the rescue efforts that took place. When I was preparing the first live drawing performance to present at the Ferrari retrospective at the Accademia Albertina (2018), a friend who saw the panorama in my studio asked me if it was an image from World War II. The question made sense because the images of devastation were similar, but they told entirely different stories: humanity destroying itself and humanity helping each other to survive in the midst of a natural catastrophe.

This anecdote fueled the dialogues with Susana, I remember the day when, already in Italy, while rehearsing the script of the performance, a conversation ended up rounding out the idea of the intervention: to work on the construction of a collective imaginary that resignifies those scenes of solidarity of the panorama, in a context in which humanity not only continues to destroy itself, but also to cause catastrophes in nature.

This conceptual approach and the creative processes of the project based on dialogue, respond to ideas of the free culture movement (on which thinkers such as Stallman, Pagola and Busaniche have theorized), this implies that culture is generated collectively from the exchange with contemporary people and also with our historical references, which constitutes our identity. In relation to this idea, the first name of this project was "Archaeologist's embrace" in reference to a text by the musician Douglas Felis: "It is like the embrace that archaeologists give each other with the past when it appears so as not to travel alone".

Marcela Rapallo, June 2022