

Narratives of Displacement
Catalina Swinburn

Preview Opening | Sunday July 1st 2018

Exhibition Dates | 01.07 to 31.07.18

The continuous change of territories and borders has always been a global concern. It produces an inside/outside situation within societies; it creates a new form of expression to ownership and belonging. These struggles have affected the upsurge in refugees and migrants crossing borders today. These are some of the issues that are explored in Catalina Swinburn's more recent series *The Perfect Boundary*, a journey that started in 2015.

Swinburn's practice investigates through a variety of media such as video, installation, sculptures and photography and the use of materials such as paper and marble. Many of Swinburn's processes start with performance whether utilising her own body in the work or the act of performance in the artwork's production. This embodiment and interconnection through time, place and space allowed the artist to express the human experience.

In this series, Swinburn combines the two performative forms by initially creating an object by the act of weaving. The materials used are archival sources from historic books such as atlases, archaeological and music. In *The Perfect Boundary*, 2016, Swinburn uses pages from an atlas from the 1970s, a documentation of a time where countries once existed and borders have changed. These archival pages are then woven into each other, which continuously modifies the shift of geographical lands. The interlaced sculpture here is worn by the artist in the performance and dragged across lands, creating its partition by recreating borders.

Where was that object in time and place before the performance? Has it taken the shape of my body? What memories will it have? What narratives will it tell and where will it go? These are a few questions Swinburn poses before, during and after each performance. She explains: "The paper works have their own life. They become a sculpture, an abandoned body that has a history that traces the form. They gained a history and remind me of stitches of memory that remain. All the cultural catastrophes around the world where cultural sites have been displaced and others destroyed."

In the work *The Sorrows of Absence*, 2018 Swinburn uses pages from an archaeological book that has reproductions of historic sites that have been recently destroyed. Through presentation and representation of these images, the artist explores the concerns and effects of the loss of National Identity in these states. Swinburn reconstructs by folding the pages into each other in an attempt to repair what was destroyed. In this way, the sculpture creates a monument that revolutionises its previous history and references the change in their time and place. Swinburn captures the ephemeral conditions of performance with photography and disseminates these images either on marble or stone. In a way, the monumental nature of the work returns and is reformed from the fragile materiality of paper to a symbolic material such as marble or stone to signify its cultural significance.

The process in which Catalina Swinburn creates her interpersonal work emphasises on the human necessity of the conditions of being, loss and destruction. Regenerating these narratives articulates a sense of urgency and a mode of resistance. With the continuous struggles globally and displacement of human beings, Swinburn expresses hope and freedom to the world and anticipates an openness for cultural dialogue.

Text by Maisa Al Qassimi