

# SANDRA CINTO

## PRELUDE FOR THE SUN AND THE STARS

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Curatorial text. Jackie Herbst

Gabriel García Márquez maintained that everything had to be decided in the first paragraph of a novel: the structure, tone, style and even the length of the narrative. Everything else, he claimed, was pure writing pleasure. That beginning, laden with honesty, was not a gesture of vanity but a pact with the reader: the certainty that every narrative needs a framework in which to anchor before it can unfold its magic. Something very similar happens with Sandra Cinto. From the very first stroke, the Brazilian artist honestly exposes the principles of her work, the tone of her universe and the scale of her landscapes. There is no artifice or distraction: the connection of points in space through lines is the origin of every drawing, and that line, here, is the prelude to an expanded world that the viewer will explore as if entering the score of a voyage.

In “Prelude for the Sun and the Stars”, that honesty translates into an immersive installation that does not force itself upon us. Although there are actually three installations that are connected through drawing, they envelop us and invite us to explore the spaces, to inhabit them, to breathe them in. Under the same tacit agreement proposed by García Márquez, the viewer/reader commits to experiencing the work, and in this encounter a meaning emerges that can only arise from interaction with the work itself.

The spatial dimension and bodily perception of the exhibit space are fundamental, as is the link to music. Just as music organises time and rhythm, for Sandra Cinto drawing engages in a dialogue with the movement of the body, as if both were part of the same score. This creates a multisensory experience in which the viewer moves, synchronises and harmonises with the work. Walking, stopping, sitting, listening and breathing: each gesture participates in the rhythm of the work. Drawing and music come together here, as music is implicit in the stroke and the harmony of silence resonates on each surface. Time, space and silence converge: for the artist, both disciplines—music and drawing—are not only forms of expression, but also forms of revolution. In a world saturated with stimuli and noise pollution, the silence that inhabits these spaces becomes a constitutive element, a bastion of resistance that offers a reflective pause. For her, a blank sheet of paper or the sound of silence are spaces of resistance, full of possibilities, which, in the face of the overstimulation to which we are exposed, become powerful tools, ready for those of us who venture to use them. As the artist herself describes, it is through sound and silence, movement and stillness, that her works explore the passage of time

within broader narratives of existence and transcendence, creating spaces for reverie that invite deeper reflection.<sup>1</sup>

Sandra Cinto transforms Hall C at Es Baluard Museu into a suspended territory where the micro and the macro coexist. The infinitely small—a dot, a line, a flash on the wall—expands into infinity: turbulent seas, starry skies, golden horizons. Everything is contained in the drawing. Its ability to overflow the two-dimensional surface transforms it into emotional architecture, into habitable space. As Rosalind Krauss pointed out when discussing the *expanded field* in contemporary sculpture,<sup>2</sup> here too we witness a disciplinary expansion: drawing becomes installation. Sandra Cinto's site-specific installations dialogue with the architecture that houses them, and the walls become the skin that covers them and touches us. Movement through space is the way we, as observers, experience them, feel them and touch them in return; because touch is the only sense that returns.

The exhibition unfolds in three interconnected sections, creating an immersive experience. Through colour and its transitions, we embark on a voyage in which space and time expand and contract simultaneously. The first of these sections, *7 Mares*, consists of a site-specific installation of seven large-format fabrics. Worked in different shades of blue, they display drawings of waves, surface ripples, rough seas and calm waters. And although the Romantic pictorial tradition resonates here, for Sandra Cinto, water and sea are also allegories of collective memory: every wave is a destination, the undulation is a voyage, and each sea contains stories of displacement, shipwreck and survival. Her skill in drawing is an affirmation that the line is capable of containing the unfathomable, of translating the dynamism of the ocean into a human gesture. Water is a recurring element in her work. It is presented in a monumental and relentless manner. For the artist, it embodies both a metaphor for the shipwreck of contemporary society and a symbol of renewal, transformation and movement.

The metaphor of shipwreck runs through much of Sandra Cinto's work. In previous works, the artist uses Théodore Géricault's ruthless 1819 painting, *The Raft of the Medusa*, to reflect on catastrophe and survival and their analogy in contemporary society. As Óscar Alonso Molina pointed out, in these images, "fate is twisted into accident, catastrophe, the unexpected. In the face of this, the heroic spirit of humanity timidly emerges".<sup>3</sup> This tension remains alive in the seven seas at Es Baluard Museu: turbulent seas, endless waves, open horizons that allude to humanity's failures and shipwrecks, but also to the persistence of moving forward, of rowing together, of seeking refuge in community.

The journey continues in two monumental murals that act as complementary poles. *Paisaje Sol – El Día*, a luminous, expansive golden mural, opens up like a metaphysical landscape that evokes the divine and the symbolic. It echoes the traditions of Japanese art, particularly in the use of gold as a background that not only illuminates but also lends the image a transcendental dimension. Drawings of expanding symbols unfold across the walls: bridges, mountains, clouds, rivers, stars, suns . . . The landscape becomes a metaphor for the passage of time; transience becomes evident and physical. One's own movement, as one travels through this golden

1. Reflections arising from conversations with the artist.

2. Krauss, Rosalind E. "Sculpture in Expanded Field". In: *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

3. Alonso Molina, Óscar. "Cuestiones sobre el fondo de las imágenes de Sandra Cinto". In: *Sandra Cinto: la otra orilla*. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 2014, p. 23 [exhibition catalogue.]

space, is projected onto the movement illuminated by the flashes we sense in the drawn elements. The level of detail in the lines results in the dissolution of physical, terrestrial and even spiritual boundaries, leading to a third space. *La Noche*, in contrast, is a mural immersed in a deep blue that evokes night, silence and introspection. If gold elevates us, dark blue immerses us in the inner and intimate. Both murals are not simple backgrounds, but emotional architectures: surfaces where the drawing becomes a symbolic and poetic field, where light and water operate as metaphors for the passage of time, which transforms everything in its path.

The symbolic nature of her thinking is evident in the way the artist transforms space-time through the visual arts. As I mentioned above, her installations oscillate between the micro and the macro: from the detail of a stroke to the immensity of a sea that occupies the entire horizon. This play on scale is not merely a formal device, but a statement about the human condition: our desires, hopes, fears and anxieties are part of who we are and determine how we inhabit reality. The exhibition unfolds as a sensory journey that turns landscapes into metaphors for our existence. The waves, the reflections of light and the stars appeal to our memory and to the flow of time, to the shipwrecks and havens that make up our lives. They raise questions about our condition: what paths do we choose to follow and how do we follow them? The answer lies not in certainties, but in the ability to allow ourselves to ask these questions honestly, to open up a space for imagination and action.

Sandra Cinto's work invites us to immerse ourselves in a universe of symbols, dreams and poetic resonances where human experience is contemplated and transformed. In this sense, her work engages with the poetry of the Brazilian Conceição Evaristo, who defends writing as an act of resistance. Evaristo insists that poetry can be a space for memory, but also for struggle; a silence that speaks, a void that resists. Her question, "What paths can we take as humanity?", resonates in Cinto's work, who considers the sheet of paper as a space full of possibilities, a resistance that, from the minimal and subtle, radically summons the political through the poetic. Precisely this same spirit present in Conceição Evaristo's poetry has also served as inspiration for the current edition of the São Paulo Biennial,<sup>4</sup> curated by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung and which, under the motto *Nem todo viandante anda estradas – Da humanidade como prática* [Not every traveller walks roads—Of humanity as a practice], poses the same questions: what does it mean to be human in times of failure, shipwreck, uncertainty? The answer lies not in offering certainties, but in asking the right questions. As Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire reminded us: art is not waiting, it is "instilling hope", a phrase that implies action, resistance and transformation.

Sandra Cinto, however, does not limit herself to grand monumental gestures. In this exhibition, she also makes room for the intimate. The artist presents a series of small painted books which, in contrast to the colossal murals, concentrate an essential value in her artistic practice: the power of education as a social foundation for transforming humanity. Since her first paintings on wooden books in 2008, books have been the foundation on which society is based for the artist. This same message is formalised in the handcrafted pinewood bench created specifically for this exhibition. One of the bench's legs is formed by a column of stacked books. Inaccessible books as an allegory for illiteracy.

4. The city where Sandra Cinto also resides.

Likewise, exchange, dialogue between different forms of knowledge, and collaboration with other hands and traditions find a place in Cinto's work. A production carried out in collaboration with master craftsman Pere Coll takes the form of a painted tile fountain installed in the museum restaurant. It recreates the waves of a sea or lake, adding another layer of meaning: the transformation of everyday space into a symbolic experience. Here, water, domesticated in a fountain, becomes a metaphor for shared memory. As the artist herself has pointed out in relation to previous projects, art can radically transform daily routine, giving new meaning to the commonplace. In this case, the fountain not only decorates the experience, but also envelops, connects and re-signifies the space as a place of encounter, interaction and contemplation.

Paulo Reis, one of the critics who has most deeply analysed the artist's career, emphasised the importance of time and memory in her work. For Reis, Cinto's drawing is not an ornamental exercise, but a way of thinking about the passage of time and inscribing subjectivity in the collective space.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, her works are temporary havens where humanity contemplates itself, mirrors that reflect both catastrophes and hopes. Just as David G. Torres points out in *El ojo espejo* [The Mirror Eye]: "The artist is a mirror-subject who reflects the world."<sup>6</sup> And Sandra Cinto's mirror gives us back a poetic reflection of our human condition, with all its contradictions.

When walking through the exhibition at Es Baluard Museu, one cannot help but wonder, like Conceição Evaristo, what paths we can take as humanity. The answer, perhaps, lies in the circularity of time and in art's ability to bring order to disorder, to give shape to scattered narratives that only find cohesion in memory. Cinto's seas, skies and fountains are not just landscapes, but metaphors for human transit: from shipwreck to haven, from fear to hope, from darkness to light.

In the face of the human catastrophes of our time, Sandra Cinto's work offers a hopeful horizon. This is not a naive or passive hope, but what Paulo Freire defined as "instilling hope": an active verb phrase, a gesture of transformation that involves caring, loving and acting. "Prelude for the Sun and the Stars" thus becomes a space-time where the viewer can breathe, listen and inhabit the work. A reminder that, despite shipwrecks, we are still capable of imagining, resisting and instilling hope.

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5. Reis, Paulo. "Construção contra a dissipação do mundo ou a epifania na obra de Sandra Cinto". In: *Sandra Cinto: Construção*. Santiago de Compostela: Dardo, 2006, p. 23.

6. Torres, David G. *El ojo espejo*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2025, p. 32.