

The Ineluctable Weight of Living

The word levity conveys spiritedness, happiness and flightiness. As Milan Kundera acknowledged, the unbearable lightness of being is ineluctably doomed by the heaviness of living: a weight built by constrictions, public or private, that ends up entangling our existence into a dense web of ever tightening knots. *Flight* is an escape, an elevation above gravity, with the aim of freeing the soul from its own mass. Our constant quest for levity is necessitated from the weight of living. It is an enduring desire fed by our deprivation.

In Lucia Warck-Meister's installation *Flight*, cages or prisons are metaphors of our psychological trappings: the fears, procrastinations and self-limitations that hold us down, heavily, from moving freely in life. These cages represent the space that we at times inhabit finding ourselves unable to leave and others we don't venture to enter.

To render concrete in the object of a cage a world that is intangible and invisible, and then to place it outside the self into the world of real, it exorcises it. One can experience it with the body, see it, touch it, penetrate it, thus, exercising greater control. The opaqueness with which we feel our inner cages, Lucia reassures us, is only an illusion. We can surmount them.

Likewise, the cages in *Flight*, far from being rigid and unsurpassable, have malleable bars that made of a vinyl coated aircraft cable hang down in mesh-like loops. Soft to the skin when they stroke our shoulders, these bars are like spider webs that enwrap us when walking through them seemingly unaware. Here the plasticity characteristic of Lucia's works is present by her careful choice of materials, selected for their sensual and

visual qualities as much as for their symbolic and suggestive meanings, being at once alluring and menacing. Invited to wander through the cages inside-out, the viewer reenacts in his/her body the transitions and voyages of the troubled soul. This is an exercise for the mind that seeks affirmation. It assures us that we can cross over, once and again, and it teaches us to live inside and outside our own cage.

The large five cages scattered throughout the huge vacant warehouse space are staged in partial darkness (the exhibit hours are after dusk), with only a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling inside each cage. They present an ominous vision. Shadows of the cages onto the floor have a dooming feeling, as do their almost indiscernible sound that confirm their presence in the dark. The viewer is forced to meander in the looming space before he/she reaches the cages, placed towards the back of the loft. The experience is both enticing and sinister.

In *Flight*, cages embody empty spaces. One enters them to experience their void. Yet, emptiness is as solid as a solid body, for they both are made of particles. And the center, as Italo Calvino would say, can be both the locus of beauty and of the storm, the source of calm as well as turmoil. *Flight* aims at reaching a state of weightlessness, etherealness and lightness. Lightness of matter --of cages made of malleable bars-- and of psychological and mental lightness --that would free the soul from the load of its constrictions. Yet, in achieving a state of weightlessness, as Paul Valery sharply remarked, one must be light like the bird and not like the feather.

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