

SOME SAY THIS BUILDING
COULD BE A CITY,
MEANWHILE I WALK DOWN PARAGUAY STREET
IN SILENCE.

IT'S NIGHT AND I AM COLD.

IN A CORNER I GET DISTRACTED
BY LOOKING AT AN EMPTY STORE.

THE LIGHT INSIDE IS VERY COLD,

I STAY STARING...

THE FLOOR IS GRAY AND I LIKE IT,

I KEEP STARING...

ON THE GLASS A RED GRAFFITI DRIPS

AND SAY NOTHING,

I STOP STARING.

I PUT MY HAND IN MY JACKET POCKET

TO SEE IF I HAVE SOMETHING INSIDE

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN TOC TOC!!

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLASS

A HAND HITS AND A GUY LOOKS AT ME.

HE PUTS A SHEET ON THE GLASS, IT'S A DRAWING.

I GET CLOSER FOR A BETTER LOOK.

IT'S A STAIRCASE AND ON THE STEPS

IT HAS SOMETHING WRITTEN ON.

COULD YOU SILENTLY WATCH

SOME ONE UNFOLD A PAPER WAD

AS IF THEY WERE GOING TO TELL YOU

A SECRET?

I NOD, HE TURNS AND LEAVES.

I AM ALONE IN THE STREET AGAIN.

'Hoy, hoy, hoy, hoy' – 'Today, today, today, today' – runs like the ticking of a broken clock throughout Clara Esborraz's works. Every insistent pulse of this 'now' is a new chance for the artist to define and change. 'Today' is both an exclamation and a question through which she explores the signs that determine and polarise the definitions of who we are, of states of mind, genders and identity.

As well as the title of this series of drawings, *Mirror* is the name of a clothing store in downtown Buenos Aires, which the artist passes every day on her way to her studio and on her way back in the small hours. In its stagey anachronistic window displays, which preserve a hint of the luxury of 1980s cocktail wear, Esborraz pays special attention to the mannequins, and to the way the blazers and tops hang in male or female postures and attitudes as if modelled by some invisible hegemonic body.

The works in *Mirror* reflect something of that nocturnal experience of wandering the streets, of working in the studio and devoting herself to drawing: moments when subjectivity is freed and bodies seem to be emptied of rules and social ties. Her drawings are populated by jackets, ties, dress shoes and other fetish garments from the world of clothes, the use of which relates to a degree of gender performativity.

Another element developed in this series are linguistic signs linked to rules applied to the body, for example, letters that determine what we can and cannot see, what does and does not exist: signs that correct and define. One drawing in *Mirror* reproduces an eye chart overlaid with crossings-out and bubbles that deform it and remove it from any index of normality (Clara has been wearing glasses since she was a child to see with greater definition). Another shows a letter 'X' which comes across as a secret on a crumpled piece of paper, reminding us that, in Argentina, this sign recently became a third legal option on IDs for those not identifying with binary male or female genders. If on the paper a drawn X is a cross or something crossed out, and its difference with a Y is merely a line segment and change of direction in the stroke, today an X stands for a way of inhabiting one's own body and the possibility of language being genderless.

How signs are inscribed on the body, how they determine the way we act, and how they shape, define and redefine identity are some of the issues Clara Esborraz investigates as she draws in her studio late into the night. Paper is the field she has chosen to explore masculinity, the performativity of clothing, eroticism and the effect caused by the objects she uses around her. If, like the body, paper is a surface on which signs are inscribed, a blank rolled-up sheet in her works is dressed in a tie; a pile of sheets of paper is pierced by a needle and thread; a third sheet burns in the heat of the night; another slides off a table while the draughter's head becomes a formless erasure. Esborraz plunges signs into crisis and gives the paper a leading role in this, requesting more space for the mutability of forms, lines and bodies.

The drawings of *Mirror* are notes towards an investigation into one's own subjectivity. In them, Clara tests out how to redraw the binarism she observes in the world around her. Much as they sometimes look like paintings, their making conceals the logic of calligraphy: they are made with ordinary Bic biros, the cheapest and most popular on the market, the kind used in government offices or schools to work, study or fill out forms. They are writing tools and, unlike the brush, which can make the paint run and flow freely over a canvas, they require insistent traction from the artist's hand. Painting with a ballpoint is a paradox: its lines are almost impossible to modulate; they are assertive yesses or noes without any shading. Yet Esborraz still seeks out nuances and mid-points: she makes outlines tremble, throwing the forms of the world around her into a critical state, while at the same time straining this materiality to its point of maximum tension.

In drawing after drawing, Clara's objects seem animated, sometimes even appearing to come to life and create rather surreal scenes. In earlier series, kettles, millstones and angle-poise lamps would weep inconsolably in her studio; they seemed to be unburdening themselves in mid-crisis. Other series of hers concentrated on the body, specifically women's bodies. These were in fact Clara herself, transformed by the use of boots, vinyl trousers and accessories, always at night. As a viewer, one cannot tell whether the transformations in Clara Esborraz's drawings take place on paper or in real life. It may possibly be both at the same time. *Mirror* is a way of exploring one's own subjectivity and of doing so through artistic effort: drawing and undrawing oneself on paper.