

# ARTFORUM



Laura Vinci, *Morro mundo* (detail), 2017, borosilicate glass, smoke machines, steel fittings. Installation view. Photo: Pat Kilgore.

## Laura Vinci

## GALERIA NARA ROESLER | SÃO PAULO

In 1951, the Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade published the poem “*A máquina do mundo*” (The Machine of the World), which among its verses reads: “The machine of the world has partially opened . . . / opened itself majestic and circumspect, / without giving off any impure sound / nor even a flash of light greater than is bearable.” The poem, which Laura Vinci has referenced in the past, again came to mind when one viewed her recent exhibition “*Morro mundo*” (Hillside World), which was made up of a structure comprising various interlocking glass tubes that occupied the total space of the room. From time to time, smoke came out of the ends of the installation, and at such moments the room was enveloped by a mist. The artist has always been interested in “the different states and vibrations of matter,” as Carlito Azevedo affirms in the commentary accompanying the exhibition. The fog floated and hovered around a setting of Vinci’s creation. This was important because it not only underlined the theatricality of the work but also demonstrated Vinci’s several collaborations with dancers, poets, and actors during the evolution of the show, who performed pieces using this machinal setting as both means and instrument.

The exhibition emphasized the dramatic tone that the work intends to explore: Beyond the tubes, the spectator was surrounded by posts that seemed to underpin the gallery's ceiling; these fought for the permanence and affirmation of the space. In addition, small glass globes housing tiny garnet crosses were fastened to the wall. In the same room were compasses whose needles pointed in different directions, leaving the viewer adrift, and balanced scales weighing the diminutive crosses. They are instruments of precision and measurement that have lost their function, and they allowed us to perceive a character arising in that enigmatic territory: the nomad, the one who travels without set destination, who never remains in one location, and whose fate is to endlessly look upon search as an ideal. He walks slowly, with no fixed destination, focused on his surroundings and his encounters. He floats through territories that are constantly being constructed in a space-time that does not harmonize certainties. The viewer was the wanderer, thrust into that indefinite and confusing space in which the milieu and the body itself were enveloped in smoke. The posts, at that moment of focus on one's own body, merged with supports, presaging ruin and catastrophe. Amid the fog, a small red X was randomly projected onto one of the walls. The letter did not denote an exact location or point of arrival, but instead served to reinforce the spectator's sense of disorientation. When the smoke coursing through the tubes finally emerged from the "machine" and ultimately occupied the room, the experience was exciting, and the sight menacing. The fog made its way through the tubes like a snake, an animal that creeps stealthily over the surface, silent, poised to strike, without its prey knowing exactly how and when it became involved, and completely at its mercy.

Symbolically, the fog in this exhibition was ambiguous. On one hand, its immateriality merged with the ethereal state of the sublime, creating an idea of refuge and shelter along with a fully corporeal perception of delicateness and all the attributes that emptiness, silence, and translucence bear for Western thought. On the other, fog as representative of hazard has a heightened political sense if we take into account the current situation of Brazil, which is beset by recession, high rates of unemployment, and uncertainty about its political future. This work, by exposing the tension between levitation and collapse, disjointed certainties about the visible and engendered games of perception that pinpoint the unstable intertwining of body, landscape, and visibility.

—*Felipe Scovino*

*Translated from Portuguese by Clifford E. Landers*