

*The Texts Collection* is a program that accompanies and amplifies artistic practices by generating a collection of monographic texts for Hangar residents. Each artist has the possibility to commission a text about their work from an author of their choice—local or international; known or to be known—in editorial dialogue with Hangar. The intention is to produce publications on their practice in general—beyond this work or that particular work—designed for agile circulation and reedition, ensuring a long life, and contributing to expanding the networks and frameworks of artistic practices.

Through this editorial device, artists can count on a comprehensive and in-depth text that captures their ways of doing and thinking holistically, integrating different projects to build an overall view of their practices. The *Texts Collection* also provides artists the opportunity to establish a writing relationship as a starting point, rather than as the result of a project or exhibition.

# The Limit is Relational

## Sofia Lemos

Deeply rooted in ideas of architectural space, Paula García-Masedo's artistic practice explores the delimitation of forms, bodies, and ideas, which she engages with to reveal technological and affective connections in the present. Her practice lies at the intersection between territory, material culture, and politics, where the material allows her to express situated approaches to distinct genealogies. Trained as an architect in Spain, her practice of curating, writing, and research expanded in recent years to include sculpture and installation as means to engage the body in a relational understanding of its physical and symbolic dimensions with its surroundings.

Reflecting on a recent body of work, the following notes were developed in dialogue with the artist and the landscapes and architecture of Japan. The title for this piece, borrowed from the artist during a studio visit at Hangar in January 2023, captures the relational poetics that infuse her approach to both art and architecture: the defining limits that seemingly separate singular bodies, histories, or instances of time—present, past, and future—are no other than relations.

### The space between things

Japanese contemporary architecture evokes a sense of sacredness and transcendence. Visiting the Teshima Museum of Art designed by Tokyo-based architect Ryue Nishizawa and Japanese artist Rei Naito, I feel invited to experience a heightened awareness of my surroundings. There are waterdrops forming seamlessly and sparsely on a hydrophobic concrete floor next to our barefoot steps within a concrete shell, devoid of pillars, that covers a hilltop space about 60 meters deep. Two oval openings above our heads bring the wind, sounds, and light of the island into an organic space where art, architecture, and the environment feel inextricably interconnected. Attending to the luminous quality of each waterdrop feels close to a mystical experience: the light refracts and slowly guides our vision to two threads hovering over pools of light. Suspended about the openings in the ceiling, they are gently blown by the morning breeze shifting the limits of the space.

The luminous has the capacity to reveal like light over shadow, making something manifest. Nothing strictly speaking appears to perception

unless it is revealed. As the philosopher David Peña-Guzmán notes, “without consciousness the world can’t appear: the past can’t appear to memory and the future can’t appear to hope or anticipation”.<sup>1</sup> Conscious awareness is relational and responsive. The power of the luminous is its capacity for taking in what is present and letting reality steadily unfold.

Reflecting on García-Masedo’s works, *Nada Separado 1* and *2* (both 2023), I am reminded of this luminous quality of artwork. Supported by an iron structure, the two curtain-like compositions of agar, glycerin, white willow, and essential oils are reminiscent of traditional architectural elements like *sudare* (bamboo blinds) and *noren* (fabric dividers) often seen at the entrance of restaurants or between rooms in a Japanese house. *Nada separado* [Nothing Separate] form a translucent bioplastic that creates flexible exhibition spaces while seamlessly blending environments. Infused by my surroundings at the time of writing, they resonate with the Zen Buddhist concept of “ma” (間), which refers to the void or the space between things; and to an aesthetic boundlessness or “non-being” (“mu” (無)) that is not devoid of meaning but rather full of potentiality and openness. Complementarily, both “ma” and “mu” are directly influenced by the Mahayana Buddhist idea of “form is emptiness and emptiness is form”, which highlights the notion that there is no separate self, but rather a continuous flow of existence in which all things are interconnected and mutually influencing each other.

These concepts hold profound philosophical significance in Japanese architecture, emphasized by its simplicity and functionality, with free-form designs and a focus on harmonizing light and materials. García-Masedo is coy to mention her early practice as an architect. Yet, she speaks of space with a trained eye for volumes and forms. For her, the delimitation of space is not merely a separation, as it is often understood, but a relation that allows for the gradual emergence of reality. In *Acumulador I* (2023), a paper-divider composed of five single hanging sheets of linen and abaca supported by iron hooks apportions two areas of an exhibition space with a single gesture. In the installation *Dido* (2023), fashioned out of A0 sheets of paper the artist produced from antique linen pulp gently leaning over an iron mesh, the weightlessness of paper and the solidity of iron, become balanced.

1 David Peña-Guzmán, *When Animals Dream: The Hidden World of Animal Consciousness*, Penguin Audiobook, 2022.

## The fold

In 2021, García-Masedo started to learn different papermaking techniques influenced by situated histories of papermaking. The latter is traditionally linked to the manufacture of vegetal fibers grown in rural contexts and in oftentimes self-sufficient peasant communities, where it was also spun and woven into textile. Attending to the artist’s own ancestry, her interest in papermaking traces a genealogy of class division and the distribution of power that is associated with it, honoring the material and those who plucked and milled it before industrialization. This interest develops from her earlier research into other textile forms and workers’ movements in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Consider *07/01/2021–07/20/2021* (2022), a group of one meter-square sheets of gelatin, glycerin, essential oils, and dried local vegetation from the artist’s family village near Madrid, supported by a repurposed iron structure. The titles for these works resonate with the concept of “wabi-sabi” (侘び寂び), which refers to an awareness of the transient nature of earthly things and a corresponding pleasure in their imperfection, impermanence, and incompleteness. This aesthetic philosophy, also rooted in Zen Buddhism, values simplicity, modesty, and the natural cycle of growth and decay. In architecture, it translates into the responsive use of raw materials, irregular forms, and a sense of understated elegance that honors the passage of time.

In *17/05/2021 I–V*, *18/05/2021 I–V*, and *20/05/2021 I–V* (2022), a gelatin sheet dried with plants from this verdant region in central Spain is carefully folded. Evoking the draping in the ultra-thin bioplastics sheets of the *Nada separado* series, the fold is reminiscent of Deleuze’s idea that the world is composed of an infinite series of folds, twisting and weaving through space and time. For Deleuze, the fold represents a dynamic, fluid reality where distinctions between inside and outside, subject and object, are constantly renegotiated. It symbolizes complexity, continuity, and the process of becoming, portraying a universe in constant flux and interconnectedness. Deleuze’s notion of the fold, in turn, is tied to Leibniz’s concept of the monad, a simple substance that reflects the entire universe within its structure.

By relating Deleuze’s concept of the fold with Zen Buddhist ideas in García-Masedo’s recent body of work, we uncover a shared vision of reality that is complex, interconnected, and constantly in flux. Both perspectives

2 It was not until the twelfth century that knowledge of papermaking reached Europe through Andalusia in southern Spain, where the first paper mills were established by Arab rulers from the Middle East after the mid-eighth century Arab-Chinese conflict, which spread papermaking to Central Asia.

challenge fixed, dualist ways of thinking, inviting us to see the world as a dynamic interplay between apparent oppositions: space and form, inside and outside, memory and erasure. For me, the divisions García-Masedo constructs in this body of work transcend traditional modes of viewership in an exhibition space, encouraging movement of the body and awareness of how perceived limits are no more than relations constructed by the space generated in between. These relations, in turn, are rich in presence and reveal the material histories that surround us. When we realize that the distinctions we perceive between self and other, subject and object, are ultimately illusory, we can begin to see the underlying unity of existence.