

CLARA DE TEZANOS & ANDREA DARDÓN.

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keeping up with AI

AN ARTIST JOURNAL: ARTISTIC PROCESSES, INSIGHTS ON THE LOCAL ART SCENE,
INTERVIEWS, ONGOING PROJECTS, AVAILABLE WORK.

EXISTENTIALISM AS A
PRECURSOR OF
PERFORMANCE

brief philosophical and
historical outline on Clara de
Tezanos artistic work

THE EARTH,
THE MOON
AND THE SUN

a behind the scenes
chronicle of the *Concert-
Dance on The Clumsy
Machine of Eternity*

PRACTICAL
EXERCISE

Clara de Tezanos proposes a
practical exercise to connect
with her work



Existentialism and performance

The philosopher Sartre proposed that *the decisions we make tie us down and define us*, a notion that I have pondered deeply since I had the opportunity to meet with the two figures who are featured in the story below. The idea that continuous and constant decision-making has the ability to model the present, your destiny and ideals, came to mind when listening to the story of how a simple comment on social media, contained within itself, an infinite universe of actions and decisions that has me today, miles away from these pair, writing this chronicle.

While we live, we build our essence, meaning, and existence.

In this world, few people stop to meditate, to wonder how even the most minuscule actions define our place in it: that we are the sum of all of our makings.

This time we share is one of instant concerns, temporary solutions, liquid dreams, and programmed obsolescence. We're in the midst of a rush focusing mainly on economic growth.

The notion of an autonomous artist who separates from the rest, an artist who creates art just for the sake of it, because she has a need that arises within herself because she wants to -while losing herself completely into the creation of her works and allowing herself to be absorbed by the objects she creates, seems, in 2022, an act very close to madness.

What for? Who... is this even for? What purpose does this type of work serve?

Precisely! What we think we do not need, what lacks practical utility perceptible to the naked eye, is what we need the most: freedom to pause, contemplate and have a space to look inside ourselves. The act of contemplation has been stolen from us -because nobody wants us to become aware of our existence.

Art, conceived from the philosophical current that it may be, let it be the product of the context and the reality that it may be, is only possible through the gaze of another. The artist becomes aware of himself through the other's gaze. And in this sense, the artist with existentialist veins is constantly searching for the absolute self through his creation.

What seemed remarkable to me when analyzing this work, which I consider to be, a paradigm of existentialist thought, is that this act of rebellious thought, this urge to search for the absolute meaning of existence -beyond conventional social structures, even above the art establishment, is a forerunner of performance, of action. The spark with transformative potential (even at a political level, for whom that possibility is their greatest obsession!)

The artist in question was looking to create objects, sculptures, and instruments—among other things. This process was so existential that she had no other alternative but to turn it into a performance.


Performance, like contemporary art, was born from the naive and rebellious Dadaists, was a mood, a demonstration against the absurdity of war, a response to the anxiety and struggle that the expansionist hegemonic economic model entailed.

These anti-materialist human actions that today we try to categorize and explain as one of the highest art forms, are freedom manifests, anti-war cries, anti-oppression, anti-art system: a sign of protest against the imposition of formats and conventions. Performance is the freedom of reason itself, it pursues *nothingness*, the most humbling existential statement there is: *I am, therefore, I do.*

In performative arts, the artist projects onto the audience the existential struggle within himself that does not exist for other people and could include objects and social structures. Seen this way, the performance artist is some vehicle, a medium, a channel that connects reality with the public that opens its senses to a new truth through the artist's guidance.

Action-based art, *la performance*, continually struggles to define its position within the art world.

The artist's main intention was always for the performance to be an experience, and very thrilled after finding out this ephemeral happening was recorded and explained in many IG posts and videos, creating a progressive history of its discourse through different mediums (a sign of the times we're living). Performance art today is as prevalent as video art culture has been with the rise of more accessible technology.



Before, an artist could present his misery because when everyone was optimistic- he was a revealer. But what violent art is needed when violence and negativity are in everything? The artist must take the opposite direction, be an antibody, and be luminous. Decadent artists are no use to the 21st century."

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

Clara de Tezanos is an artist who has escaped the superficial labels and classifications very typical in Central America. Together with her curator Andrea Dardón, they will tell us about performative concepts and their approach to a live encounter with art, questioning rules, ideas, and dialogues in the purest ephemeral art form.

Here, and not to spoil anything else, I recall the language of Sartre, the existential philosopher par excellence, to summarize what live artistic performance means to the public, the artist and, therefore, to the arts.

In *The Concert-Dance on the Clumsy Machine of Eternity* - the closing performance of the exhibition *The Sun is The Source*, by Clara de Tezanos, which we cover below-, a new dimension of being arises in which I exist outside of myself as an object for the others. It is an *art-for-others*. It implies a perpetual conflict since each for-itself seeks to recover its being by making the *other*.

KUWA presents a brief tale about the Concert-Dance on the Clumsy Machine of the Eternal, a true Central American *art-for-others*.



The Earth, The Moon and The Sun.

The sum of many successful events, *The Sun is The Source*, is the art exhibit where the *Concert-Dance of The Clumsy machine of Eternity* took place.


It blossomed thanks to the tremendous impact that working with friends can have. I have to tell you that I've learned in this journey of other people's processes that *nothing is what it seems*.

A year and a half into the pandemic, Clara and Andrea had lost a bit of contact. They reconnected via a comment on an IG post-Clara made, which allowed Andrea to join, without hesitation, a collective of multidisciplinary artists.

A post-pandemic meeting ended up being their first work session where they developed what was to come.

The work Andrea commented on IG was an experimental video that she would help produce a few days later. From that point on, it was evident to both that they had a deep connection (they were soulmates who truly understood each other). Andrea, at first, did not want to assume the great responsibility (of guiding Clara's career to a safe port). However, their affinity was so profound that Andrea had to accept becoming Clara's curator.

A new cycle was underway; the wheels began to turn. They had received an invitation from Galería La Rebelde to present their performance number. They would have roughly a quarter of a year to prepare a one-of-a-kind multi-sensory experience.

A photograph of a light-colored wooden table with a curved leg. On top of the table is a small wooden structure resembling a sailboat, with a tall, thin mast and a large, solid black triangular sail. To the left of the mast is a small, ornate wooden finial. The background is a plain, light-colored wall with vertical paneling. The floor is a dark, textured surface.

The madness. The adrenaline. The race against time. While we decide whether or not to challenge conventions in any of their forms, the universe around us continues to rotate uninterrupted.

If we think of our actions as a fruit, or the product of a constellation of events, objects, or endeavors, we would be able to see this began with a ray of sunshine lucky enough to land in front of Clara. That was it: a ray of sunlight inspired a sequence of events that gave birth not just to one but to hundreds of sculptures. Clara was orbiting around her creations -with such a powerful drive that her work was pulling her in.

The multi-media format became a challenge in this race against time. Clara is an artist who works very quickly. However, she needed to produce between seven to eight different types of media. Where most artists I know are picking their brains on how to turn a drawing into a painting without having it lose its meaning, Clara was dealing with more complex problems.

Clara's work entailed intricate tridimensional pieces. Some of them were votive ritual objects, sculptures (or what The Order understood as *spaceships*), and different musical instruments employed to invoke interdimensional entities. *All in one. Batteries sold separately.*

Something was blooming, like Spring; this complex work pulled them in like a magnet. They say in their own words that the work had a pulling force. Who wouldn't believe that? It behaved like a hydra monster: when you cut one of its heads, two more popped out.

The closure of this process took years to cook (because it had to resonate within Clara). The source, the Sun, was herself.

AS: How did this process start?

CDT: The videoart gave way to the portable sculptures (inspired by the ancient traditions of Guatemala in the spirit of the procession, dance, and ceremony).

So, the sculptures came first. For some reason, I think the space I selected for this project at the beginning inspired me to make the video. Andrea helped me put everything together. So, after the portable wooden votive sculptural dress, *Ex-Voto*, diaphanous objects emerged in the blink of an eye. Then we went to Paris. Then Mexico. I realized I needed to showcase the non-curated works I piled up in my studio over the years. Around October of last year, we began to analyze what would become of all that research.

AD: You also moved to Antigua...

CDT: Yes! The pandemic changed my life. I invested a lot in a project I had to close up in Guatemala City. I moved to Antigua, which is a city filled with ancient history. A lot of past.

A space with so much beauty represented a geographical change that would allow me to work at my fullest potential.

I went into a creative trance and suddenly found myself surrounded by many objects. I just thought, "Help!"

AS: Could you talk a little bit more about the making of the artwork?

CDT: Like in any creative process, it all starts with the uncertainty of the results. It was a force, a historical echo carrying me along with Andrea through that research. Although we talked first about the performance, its exploration did not begin until after the art opening.

When the exhibition was born, we put our heads into the performance that excited us (but terrified us).

Clara and Andrea carried out many outdoor activities.

During that process, they explored several alternatives on how to showcase so many artworks. La Rebelde is a big space. The architecture of the place inspired them to want to add some movement, animate their pieces, to illuminate them in many ways - contributing to the idea of the performance.

This work is so existential that it could only end up as a performance. An artist was not satisfied with the qualities of the exhibition space granted to her and challenged it through collective action.

AS: Could you mention any work from *The Sun is the Source* that is directly related to the performance, *Concert-Dance on The Clumsy Machine of Eternity*?

CDT: *Theories* (a series of works I presented at *The Sun is The Source*) revolve around the ellipsis. The research explains the contributions some physicists made to understanding the influence light has in our world. This art piece is important because it inspired the name of the art collective we created. We named it *Hypatia's Order*.

It's relevant to say Clara has an interest in physics; she's been studying the main physical theories written about the sun for years to understand its functioning as our source of light. After presenting *Theories* - consisting of seven maps referring to principles proposed by some outstanding physicists throughout history. One day, Clara concluded that she left out Hypatia, the physicist who invented the ellipsis - stoned to death just for being a woman! - Hypatia allowed Kepler, Fludd, and the rest of the physicists present in Clara's work to make their respective discoveries.

Aware of her omission on Hypatia, having met her discoveries through the same process of research the performance took, she decided to honor her name through collaboration: a performative ritual.

AS: How did the performance process begin?

AD: In the beginning, they couldn't tell what the final result was like but were free to experiment and present their work at Galería La Rebelde, which became some Temple at the moment of the performance. La Rebelde was so open, thrilled, and involved with the production of this happening they even facilitated the blindfolding experience that led the public to cover their eyes as a way to imagine an eclipse. An act of psycho-magic, a vivid theater would come to life with the involvement of the public in the performance. *A happening*.

Clara met with her musician friend Alex - who, like her, has always shown a great interest in light. They imagined a sculpture that would make organic sounds because they were, looking, hunting for *the sound of emptiness*. Alex is a sound engineer. As such, he participated in all the exploration sessions they had throughout this process which produced many triumphant sounds. *The Clumsy Machine* (to put it in simple words) is a handmade music box. Unclean. Super Extra. Baroque Coco Rosie.

The endless rehearsal sessions took place under a yellow Maquilishuat tree blooming during this trial and error madness. The tree meant so much to them that its seeds representing the sun were in the *Fertility Parade*. To close the performance, the *Order of Hypatia* spread Maquilishuat tree seeds (the tree is where they conceived it).

Although the rehearsing sessions fostered closeness between the group members, their friendship was an important key for them to connect and flow towards their goal of having a ticking-bomb-opening date. Clara believes that surrounding herself with creative people with whom she shares interests is key to imagining the impossible.

The Order of Hypatia debuted at La Galería Rebelde. It gave life to *The Clumsy Machine of Eternity* with a concert and dance. The Order is a multidisciplinary and diverse group of friends among which you'll find musicians, professional and amateur dancers, and singers. Andrea herself, curator of the exhibition and performance, also gave her input as a creator and imaginer of worlds through her knowledge of cinema. Andrea believes this endless process was carried out thanks to some inner knowledge and intuition embedded in all of us women. She perceives women as an extension of nature and for whom paying tribute is a sublime expression of love.

While Alex played The Sun role in the middle of this ritual scene, comparable only to the one Botticelli portrayed in his *Primavera* painting, the voices of the artist and her collaborators filled in the space along with music produced with *The Clumsy Machine*.

Clara describes this experience as a supernatural happening. The rush they felt together even made her shed some tears; she experienced a connection with the rest of the group beyond what they could ever imagine.

Since the action occurred during an eclipse (remember, the audience at La Rebelde was blindfolded to live this experience), they could only imagine the ritual behind such a dark curtain. Although they did not see what was happening, they could still feel the performance.

This phenomenon, though, can be explained through neuroscience. Singing allows the release of high doses of dopamine (a neurotransmitter present in the brain). When singing, this neurotransmitter produces a feeling of well-being in response to pleasant stimuli such as eating or being high on cocaine. The happiness, the sensation of liberation, and the collective hysteria that the performance ignited were, in effect, group madness. They were *drunk on art*.

Clara feels that what happened during the performance cannot be categorized as art because it was a pure, humble act.

I like to think that what they both produced is one of the most consistent and existentialist artistic expressions of the times we live, to the point I felt compelled to narrate it to you.

After listening to what I have just tried to explain, I can only think about it as a liberating act. It reminds us that *the essential is invisible to the eye*.

Trying to describe what a psycho-magical-ritual-experience this was is quite a challenge and, I confess, somewhat a pretentious action. But I tried. In the end, *The Sun is the Source* lies neatly packed and tucked in many boxes in Clara's warehouse. The performance is now a tale; without a registry, it could disappear through time.

Out, out! Brief candle!

I compare this storytelling effort to imagining the Nagasaki bombing experience just by looking at the pictures taken from the plane used to drop the bomb. Yeah.

AS: How do you feel now that this is finished, with this show all wrapped up?

Clara imagines her closure as a heavy ship that she was able to get afloat. She feels joy, peace, and calmness for having lived through such an experience.

Andrea, on her part, became a priestess in the *Temple of Art Displaying*, spending up to twelve days in a row at La Rebelde, working up to twelve straight hours (I'm very much in her style). She had to stage more than a hundred artworks. Andrea now feels as if rescued from a hypnotic trance. After many months dedicated to this *nothingness*, she finally feels calm.

AS: Is this the end? Or The Sun is the Source will produce more artworks, again?

It's gone. It's in storage while it moves to its new homes. Next is the tour of The Order of Hypatia in other spaces and places; hopefully, with local people, we want to open this experience to the community.



Practical exercise

Clara de Tezanos
proposes a practical
exercise to connect with
her work.

1. Search for an object among the most precious or mundane objects you've collected in your closest space. It should allow light to pass through. It can be a shiny, reflective material, like a spoon, a mirror, a glass, stones, jewels, prisms, or even lenses (among other infinite possibilities).

2. Seek the Sun. Expose the object directly. Guide it towards the sun, receive the sunlight, and redirect it in a trial and error dynamic towards a surface.

3. Play freely. Enjoy the feeling of wonder.

CLARA DE TEZANOS

EXHIBITION: THE SOURCE IS THE SUN
WORK-PERFORMANCE:

CONCERT-DANCE ON THE CLUMSY
MACHINE OF ETERNITY.

The Order of Hypatia Volume I. Was:

Clara de Tezanos – Work and Direction.
Alex Hentze – Intervention on the Clumsy Machine of Eternity
/ interprets The Sun.

Andrea Dardón – Curatorship.

Guest artists:

- Mena Guerrero – Dancer and singer / Kite.
- Carolyn Moyer – Oracle.
- Giglia Canesa – dancer - Mobile starship: A star.
- Hazel Lopez - dancer - Mobile starship: A star.
- Emilia Nicté – dancer - Mothership/ The Earth.
- Angie González – Dancer / The Moon.

Image credits: Rita Flores and Juan Ro García.

THIS PROJECT WAS HOSTED BY GALERÍA LA REBELDE.



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Clara de Tezanos



YouTube Clara de
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KEEPING UP WITH AL

AN ARTIST JOURNAL: ARTISTIC PROCESSES, INSIGHTS ON THE LOCAL ART
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Keeping Up With All beliefs in democratic spaces, the plurality of voices, and the diversification and decentralization of the discourse in the cultural field.

Here you'll find the concerns of other active artists in different media and fields of the Latin American art scene, creators and academics who find themselves developing works and innovative research impacting our community.

In their own words, they share their creative processes, research, and stories.



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