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Enrique Ramirez
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Enrique Ramírez

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For his first solo exhibition in France, "*Cartografías para navegantes de tierra*" (Cartographies for Navigators of the Earth), Enrique Ramírez, a Chilean artist based in Santiago and Paris, presented work that navigates the vast distances in between. Nearly all the works featured Ramírez's writing—prayerlike Spanish prose—often set to the rhythm of waves.

La invención de América (The Invention of America), 2013, a Dacron sail made by the artist's father and a separately framed text, functioned as a central icon. Inverting the worn triangular piece of material and containing it within a grid of twenty-seven thin metal frames, the artist transformed a symbol of passage into a schematic approximation of the South American landmass. The electric whir of Ramírez père's sewing machine envelops *Mapa de Viento* (Wind Map), 2012, a video projection that presents the maritime artisan in his orderly studio, stitching a sail for a yacht. His work surface has been covered by an expanse of reflective liquid that mirrors his hands, torso, and serene expression on an aquatic stage. The artist's words (at times clumsily translated into English) float across the bottom of the projected video, knitting the dream of escape: "I am building a machine that will fly with the wind and will float on the sea, in order to cross the world for being able to see from the other side."

Ir-Volver (Go-Come Back), 2012, is engulfed by melancholy, like a sinking ship taking on water. Two pages ripped from the artist's passport and pinned with copper nails inside black frames are accompanied by text etched on glass: "Go: to navigate it is necessary to have a boat, a rudder, a sail, . . . a friend. . . . Come-back: It is necessary to . . . have someone from the family who expects you . . . it is necessary to be afraid." Here, the romantic solitude of a voyage depends on the intimacy of good-bye and the anxious anticipation of reunion.

Powered by thick black electric cables that draped to the floor, a series of small, reliquary-like video screens glowed inside black frames and through glass etched with poetic phrases. *De Alla* (From There), 2012, pairs images of an inky churning ocean with the words "Travelled more than 80 thousand leagues, floated and left no trace, no one could find it, came to paradise full of invisible memories. . . ." Conjuring a watery vision of baptism or rebirth, Ramírez lyrically intones a journey of transcendence.

Bas Jan Ader's tragic departure on his pocket cruiser *Ocean Wave*—after all his falls, all his tears—put the focus on the romantic fragility of the solitary mariner. Ramírez, on the other hand, zooms out to a wider frame, capturing in his work the multiple narratives present along a given trajectory. For his earlier, epic project, *Océan*, 2013, Ramírez mounted his camera atop the cargo ship *Pacific Breeze*, fixing his lens for a twenty-four-day sequence, made as the ship traversed two great oceans on the way from Santiago to Dunkirk, France, via the Panama Canal. In this show, the sublime photograph *Muro* (Wall), 2013, shot from the invincible vessel, contains tales of hardship, isolation, and monotony within the dark, stony face of the Chilean coastline. Of course, there is a complex and unbalanced history to the political, economic, and artistic relationship between South America and Europe, its former colonial master. Ramírez seems to want to restart the voyage of discovery and conquest but in reverse. In his ritualistic revisiting of these passages of occupation and exchange, he crafts the story of a new pilgrimage, an expedition athwart the current of history.

—*Lillian Davies*