

Martha Hellion*
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XIMENA PÉREZ GROBET: An Artist of Books¹



Pink.



Ximena Pérez Grobet's book-objects incite us to cross the threshold of the page. Through a retrospective survey of her work, we can move past the page as a mere material object in order to lose and then find ourselves in her pieces' multiple facets of materiality. One metaphor to illustrate her work is that of a forest carpeted in fallen leaves. Their textures, venation, and lamina are transformed into paper pages whose essence is reinvented and metamorphosed in unexpected ways. Sensitive to their variations in quality and diverse features, she gathers the leaves on her path, assembling them in multifarious ways, and with different intentions, to continually produce new formats.

Pérez Grobet's explorations of space and time in her pieces allow us to understand her process, development, and way of perceiving and disarticulating the many elements structuring a given language, whether verbal, visual, or tactile. Each piece emanates from a specific interpretation of what books — and writing — are and can be. Each proposal leads to new readings in which the performative gesture of the paper and page, as well as other material components, prove fundamental.

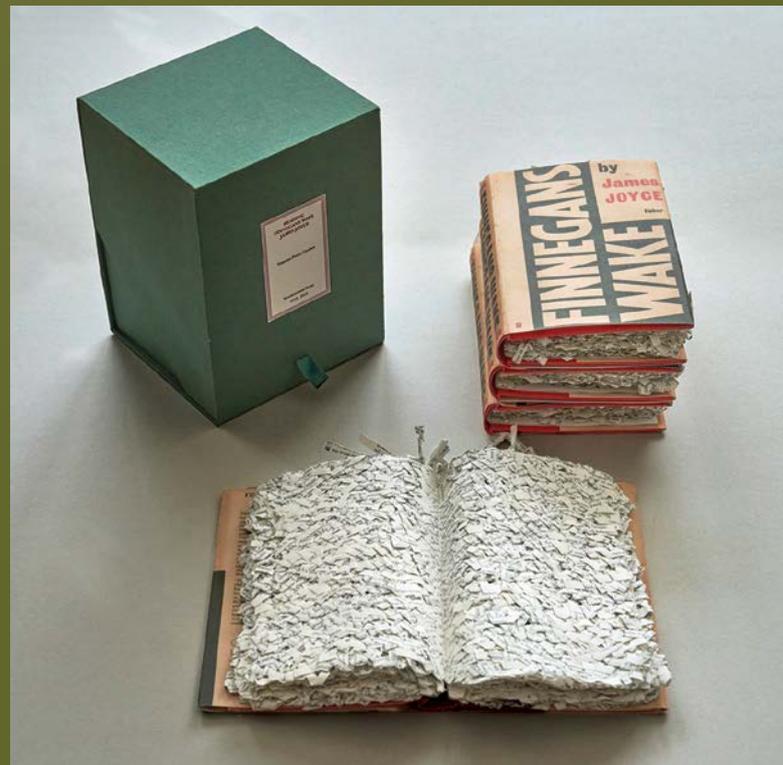
Trained in editorial and industrial design, and a great enthusiast of architecture, Pérez Grobet seeks constant dialogue between these disciplines in her work. She also finds inspiration in Conceptual art, Eastern artistic aesthetics and the avant-garde of the early twentieth century. In this mesh of relationships, the artist takes on an exercise of remem-

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Air Made Visible.



Finnegans Wake.



Discover.



Around the Corner.



Words.



Fragmenta.

brance and recreation based on societal events, readings, and intimate experiences, thus resignifying her personal history as well as collective history.

The titles of her compositions function like steppingstones along the way, providing us with keys or hints for interpretation. Some are tied to design and printed publication, as with “Encuadres” (Frames), “Entre líneas” (Between the Lines), and “Publica me” (Publish-Me). Meanwhile, her “Trayectos” (Paths) can be understood with the turn of a page — as we go “Around the corner” — helping us “Discover” the book’s multiple materialities. To continue with this idea of material reconfiguration in printed publications, the artist provocatively revisits texts ranging from the tabloid journalism to Octavio Paz’s *Labyrinth of Solitude*, James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, and the “Words” in Wallace Stevens’s poetry. Some pieces present themselves as unexpected ways of reading and resignifying the span of a lifetime, as in “Lecturas del espacio” (Readings of Space), “24 horas” (24 Hours), and “Decalustro” (Semicentennial). Some of these steppingstones push us to solve certain natural riddles, with titles as poetic



as “Aire hecho visible” (Air Made Visible). We may also glean her critical perspective and commitment to society, as in her piece “2.10.1968–2018,” alluding to the government-led massacre in Tlatelolco, Mexico City, on October 2, 1968.

In all her pieces, she defines and enters into dialogue with format and its place in space and time. As part of her own inner searchings, Ximena Pérez Grobet transports us from the sensitivity of her calligraphy and diary writing to an “In-framince” à la Duchamp, defying legibility in order to find new ways of signifying the act of reading.



Labyrinth of Solitude.



Pérez Grobet’s work profoundly recalls the structures of nature — fragile as leaves yet magical — with sensations and subtleties tying her to the surrounding world. It would seem that her tangible pieces can even lead us to understand the intangible, through other languages and strategies that amplify our fields of perception and help us understand what each of these seeks to be communicate. In the awareness that one cannot understand such messages at first read, the author invites us to strip the leaves of time so that we might fly besides her in air and space.

Through her work, Ximena Pérez Grobet shows that, to cross a threshold, sometimes one needs only turn the page. Her mastery of the art of pages is proof that she understands every kind of leaf, lamina, and venation. On top of that, she reveals that, at the root of this art, a tree symbolizes wisdom and existence: therein lies the origin of paper, books, and libraries as sources of knowledge — but also of infinite, vibrant energy. **MM**

Notes

1 The text presented here is a redrafting of the presentation text for her most recent exhibition, *ADSUM*, at the Mexican Culture Seminar’s gallery in Mexico City.