

STATION

Nadia Hernández

Notas de cocina para una exposición
Cooking notes for an exhibition

1.

Con la punta de los dedos... (with the tips of your fingers...) is an instruction from “costillas de cochino y cachapa,” a recipe written by my mother.

She writes:

Aplanar con la punta de los dedos humedecidos hasta que quede como una panqueca.
Cocinar hasta que acaramele.

Flatten with the moistened tips of your fingers until like a pancake. Cook until caramelised.

A cachapa is a traditional Venezuelan and Colombian dish made from fresh/tender corn dough/batter...not as popular as the arepa or hallaca but I prefer it...

When I think of the cachapa my mouth starts to water, recalling the sound the batter makes when it hits the pan and charred marks start to appear around its bubbling craters. Almost fearful of trying these recipes I stick to what I know: The arepa! And rather treat these ingredients and procedures with another form of reverence.

In the methodology of a recipe there is poetry that speaks to the relationships held by those caught between the exchange. Giving someone a recipe is a sacred act, you are teaching a person how to make something which will nourish them. Nourishment is sustenance that is delicious and loving.

When I told my mom about the title for the exhibition she said:

“Porque con la punta de los dedos se hacen cosas delicadas.”

“Because with the tips of our fingers we make delicate things.”

2.

Soon after I moved, the Perro Mucuchíes appeared in my room. I wasn't expecting this Andean canine to find me, but I had been thinking about him constantly, almost obsessively. Providing guidance and devotion I decided to follow this *perro de los páramos* (dog of the highlands) directly back to its namesake, *directly back to where you can't see the horizon and sight collides with the mountains...*

3.

You are allowed and most welcomed to go back in time if you wish to pick up something you've lost or if the time lapsed allows you the opportunity to travel backwards with a revised perspective.

Beware though:

Do not get stuck!

Return...

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4.

On the hunt for poetry, whatever that is as material...
I decided that my mom's recipes were very beautiful
a list of ingredients
that called for X amount of this or that...got me stuck on the "of"
"of" exactly what are we made of?
"of butter at room temperature" – that is what we are made of..
butter at room temperature takes on the form of whatever it touches
it shifts its shape to meet and join that which receives it...
butter at room temperature is so soft, it melts...
melting rapidly through the walls of a vessel or frying pan, onto hands, spoons, whatever dish it's
joining...
unstoppable
pyroclastic

5.

If you rub the leaves of the *frailejón (espeletia)* you'll avoid getting dizzy in high altitudes

6.

De lo que somos...
de mostaza
de mayonesa
de mango maduro en cubos pequeños
de sal y pimienta negra al gusto
de repollo morado picado
de mezclas y remezclas
de palabras que aún no existen
de nada auténtico y experiencias cotidianas
de pan duro
de oro puro
de puro pan...
de perros bravos
y bravos pueblos

Of what we are...
of mustard
of mayonnaise
of ripe mango in small cubes
of salt and black pepper to taste
of chopped purple cabbage
of mixes and remixes
of words that are yet to exist
of nothing authentic and everyday experiences
of stale bread
of pure gold
of just bread
of brave dogs
and brave people

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7.

The headline read: A fireball passes uncomfortably close to the earth...

:|

8.

When we return
the pumpkins, cacao and heliconias
will be the size of the banana trees
will now surpass the walls
y tocarán los picos (and touch the peaks)
¡no importa! (it doesn't matter!)
viviremos entre esos dioses (we will live among those gods)
los mismos que nos enseñaron (the same ones who taught us)
no temerle a la neblina (not to fear the fog)

9.

A manera (way) of soothing the internal world

10.

Remember to memorise *Florentino y El Diablo* the iconic poem by Venezuelan writer Alberto Arvelo Torrealba, so that when people ask you about your painting *Tweety and The Devil* you can give them some context...

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Diego Ramírez The Creed

① list of ingredients

My mum measures soft boiled eggs with a prayer, 'The Apostles' Creed', because it takes three minutes to recite. Then she pours the runny eggs into a cup, where she adds salt and lemon, to eat them with a teaspoon for breakfast.

Impossible ambiguities such as this riddle her recipes, which she stores in a pile held by a paper clip, that she inherited from my 'abuelita' (diminutive for grandmother) who was one of her two mothers, or in more objective terms, her aunt.

My *abuelita* had long white hair that reached below her hips, and she used to brush it for hours, wearing it as a mirror of her strong character. She raised my mother alone in a historic district, or *barrio*, where she also took care of colourful birds held in large cages, who sang to the sunrise. Something else—more ethereal and less beautiful—lived in the house: a poltergeist, who appeared in dreams. This was the spirit of an older woman, who explained that thieves killed her during a robbery but never found her money, because she buried it underneath the house—this is also why she cannot crossover, because greed is a deadly sin. Or so they have told me.

I visited this spectral abode once and felt fear, for that which I have never seen but have heard through others, stories about strange noises in the kitchen, corridors and rooms.

My mum's biological mother was *mami* (diminutive for mother), a beautiful woman whose face became paralysed after cooking, because she attended a knock on the door, that let a cold gush of wind come in, hitting her warm body, and tragically freezing her face. This incident taught us to never open the door after cooking, or touch cold water, while our bodies are still warm.

Once I slept with someone in winter, and had to politely refuse to fill a cup of water until a half hour had passed—the equivalent to a rosary—because I feared the cold wind in the kitchen could paralyse my face. I do not know if I was expressing a boundary, a want, or a need, but I was firm.

② mixing & handling

This notion of learning, inheriting and acting upon knowledge is central to Nadia Hernández's *Con la punta de los dedos* (*With the tips of your fingers*), a poetic exhibition of textiles, paintings and collages, inspired by a moving line in one of her mother's recipes, where she instructs Nadia to use the tips of her fingers to flatten dough.

There is an idyllic and ominous tone to this command, which is evocative of activities that need precision and delicacy, such as deactivating a ticking bomb, or caressing a lover's dry lips (when the kitchen is cold, and water is out of reach). Hernández reconciles this strange polarity, with the tips of her fingers, by creating a series of politically charged works that evoke the wondrous and innocent landscapes of childhood reverie.

Like most of her practice, she deploys a charming style, reminiscent of colourful paper cut-outs or crayon drawings, alongside lyrical texts in Spanish, to bring forth dislocated cultural scenes from her troubled homeland of Venezuela. However, rather than a journalistic portrait that captures the crude realities of the world, her pieces are closer to a mental image, that unfolds with her limbs. Like a familial recipe that leads to a feast, this act of making revitalises memories of place, shared and enjoyed by those who meet the objects that this process manifests.

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⊖ temperature & time

Her oil painting *Pesadilla #1 / Nightmare #1* exemplifies this method of recollection across time, where she appears to conjure images like a medium invoking a ghost in a séance— set up in the kitchen table, where fingers rest on a Ouija board—by depicting a nightmarish scene. This work sits somewhere in between post-cubism and a pre-Hispanic codex, for it shows an amorphous and vaporous figure, caught in a fog of vibrant squiggles. The artist inscribes a cryptic heart and a crown in this flat realm, found within a crooked composition of lines that destabilises the ‘modernist grid’, which art historian Rosalind Krauss speaks of as a demarcation between the past and the present.

Like a Latinx immigrant in so-called Australia, staring at the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, which demarcates the limits between the present *here* and past *there*, this phantasmagorical distortion of the grid collapses places, temporalities and selves. It is the same collision of planes that occurs when a psychic mediates ancient phantoms, or a child rescues lost memories, by cooking arcane familial recipes.

We may use our fingers to read and follow the marks in canvas, and threads in fabric, of Nadia Hernández’s show, and uncover these meditations at a distance, without contact. Like lines in the bible, or sentences in a familial recipe, interpreted in the disorienting darkness of the kitchen floor with a candle—during a power outage, when the home resembles a monastery—we are bringing something remote, closer to our eyes.