

Text by Yasemin Imre

The second sentence in my first ever conversation with Manuela was about protest. The first was about where we were respectively from, so it naturally followed you see. This fact and also the added prism of protest marches being held regularly in both of our adopted Swiss cities made us zero in on a comparison of protests here, and protests there, basically begging the question : where are the riots?

In response to this question and our invitation, for 'Aquí no hay nada pasando', Manuela covers Zabriskie's windows with plywood in the same manner retailers board up their storefronts when protests 'strike' to protect themselves from supposed looting that could take place in the case of a riot. A strategy to say 'move along now, nothing to see here' or a more firm, 'nothing will happen here'. The title of the show echoes this messaging of the boarded up windows but also a common sense about Switzerland: Manuela tells me there is a Chilean meme trend of captioning videos of absurd and funny urban moments with 'Imagine living in Switzerland and missing out on \*this\*' ("Imaginate vivir en Suiza y perder-te esto"). The punchline being that the idealisation of the so-called serenity of the Alpine country comes with its drawbacks and that truly nothing worth noting ever happens in Switzerland.

Perhaps nothing does ever happen here, but a lot happens through here as most of us well know.

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In Santiago, Manuela would locate herself in the city in terms of the orientation of the Andes. I'm used to doing this with water, cities that have a body of water usually lead to it. Whereas mountains: protect the city. Protection implicates isolation. For Manuela, seeing mountains in general has an affect of scale. They are so big, we are so small, in extension our problems equally small, if problems had a physical size that is. But also if we are so teeny tiny, does that make many teeny tinies coming together in the face of the surmounting power, inconsequential? Certainly not. As if to prove a point, on her way to buy cheaper cardboard boxes in -boycott-Germany, Manuela came across a mountain of snow, bigger than her, but not that big (see photo). The aspirational largesse of a mountain ridiculed by the trompe l'oeil of a parking lot snow dump.

Inside Zabriskie, visible through the eye holes of the plywood, Manuela shows mountains out of dust dumps, as if the dust in the space held a meeting and decided to come together to form a very consequential and imposing body overnight. A moth with a star shaped hole is perched by the dust mountain ready to combust into dust\*. Little matchstick boxes are also arranged in the space with little mountain vistas on their front, having been snowed on with fake snow. A reminder of the illusory nature of what the vista represents, that fake neutrality, that impure purity. All is a matter of scaling, and breaking through the isolatory illusion. There *is* something happening.

Palestine will be free.



\* Manuela repurposed this moth from a work where she formed a European flag with these moth 'stars'.



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