



## **An anarchic success that comes from the heart**

Are You Ready to Be Happy? is a selection of works by Fernanda Laguna (Buenos Aires, 1972), produced between 2000 and 2001, and structured around three moments through which to think about those years: the relationship between personal (emotional) crisis and economic crisis; the emergence of the art space/gift shop Belleza y Felicidad (1999–2008); and recurring references to music—from Gilda to Pet Shop Boys—as a kind of antidote for escape and dance.

What were the 2000s in these works by Fernanda? According to her: depressive expressionism, but also a strong desire to make things—minimal gestures on raw canvas, scrambled planes, objects that seem to have fallen and stuck to the surface. They portray a moment through the words we all use to refer to ourselves. There was a before: her two exhibitions at Centro Cultural Rojas in 1994 and 1995, where Jorge Gumier Maier was present—he connected, wrote about, and transformed Fernanda’s work, and remains today an active guiding star for thinking about the art we make.

At the end of 2001 came the crisis for everyone: the year closed with looting, no money, and deaths. That crisis was there, but so were many others within each individual. Crisis is being unable to do something, being stuck in an unpleasant loop. It is often said that crises are moments of great creativity and production, but the truth is that a crisis cannot be represented—it only appears through the fabric of things, it spills over.

In many of these canvases, white appears as a space for ambition—an unlimited site of surrender and fear. Sudden shifts in personality. “At home I was one person, and in the shop another,” Fernanda says.

Sociability was (and is) a place where one gets a little lost, a little hurt: how can one avoid openings and the flashes of happiness they bring? The shop, which opened in 1999 together with Cecilia Pavón, had open doors—not a space cut off from the street, but one permeable to the unknown and the unlikely. This is how projects and exhibitions emerged, and how people appeared who brought along other people.

There was also literature—written and published almost simultaneously—a literature that was the very body that danced and made works. During these years, Fernanda self-published seven chapbooks: *Salvador Bahia ella y yo*, *Los celos no ayudan la culpa tampoco*, *Licor de café club de señoritas y señoras*, *Tatuada para siempre* (as Dalia Rosetti), *Samantha*, *La ama de casa*, *Sueños y pesadillas I y II*. These small fanzines carried the magical inspiration of Brazilian cordel literature—an idealized place full of desire, and of economy in all its possible meanings. There is a mantra-like quality in the writing, a belief that repetition makes things real, and that literature is material, like another kind of fertilizer for the soil.

Fernanda's work moves from the fanzine to domestic curating, from the home to the shop, from personal work to accompanying others. Its forms are those of autobiography: the diary, the letter, the telephone, the mouse, the notebook, the synoptic chart. To make—and to let it be seen—that things are not quite working, but not entirely falling apart either.

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