

Titanic „Vidrio“ Bio / EN

‘Cielo Falso’ (False Sky) was the first song of the project. It's a song that really focuses on small details, and the existential crisis of someone who has travelled down a long road and still doesn't know where they are going.” (Hector Tosta)

“I planted a dog rose. Then I found a curious piece of driftwood and used this, and one of the necklaces of holey stones on the wall, to stake the rose. The garden had begun. I saw it as a therapy and a pharmacopoeia.” (Derek Jarman)

In 1986 the artist and filmmaker Derek Jarman bought Prospect Cottage, a Victorian fisherman's hut on the shore of Dungeness. Jarman busied himself with creating a garden, a “pharmacopoeia” of found objects, plants and elements of the ever-evolving, immediate landscape. This garden project - “a practical toolbox for his work”, according to Jarman's friend, the actress Tilda Swinton - became one of his most enduring legacies, and is still a place of great healing and wonder.

At first glance, there is no relation between Jarman's tiny wooden cottage and garden on a deserted sea shore and the relentless human press and noise of Mexico City, where Mabe Fratti and Hector Tosta, aka Titanic, made their album, Vidrio. The album's cover picture - a city tower block, seemingly decorated in the style of a dazzle ship - hints at the fitful, often imperceptible patterns of urban life and may also reflect a recording process that moved between Fratti and Tosta's house (which they name the “Tinho Studios”), Progreso Nacional and Pedro y el Lobo Studios, where the bulk of the work was done.

The mosaic-like pattern adorning the tower block can also be read as a visual warning; that our initial expectations on the record will be led astray. On Vidrio, complex sonic patterns are often gradually teased out, to then assume another form. The music often feels it is constructed as a series of stage sets for a play, or opera, set in the city. Scenes are removed and new scenery put in place. Moody urban shapeshifting is found with ‘Hotel Elizabeth’, a drifting, languorous reflection that, given the plucked bass lines and slightly braying sax played by Jarrett Gilgore, sounds like a score from a 1940s movie, with Fratti the chanteuse in front of a weary palm court orchestra. The sax continues to misbehave, reinforcing a sense that soon this illusion will be shattered and another erected in its place. Other tracks like the querulous ‘Te evite’ (born, according to Tosta, “from the feeling of being judged, with tied hands, and the anger that gets stuck inside”) and the dolorous ‘Círculo Perfecto’ create filmic and primarily urban backdrops; also emotional hinterlands that aren't easily mapped: the listener can conjure up various images and moods that could mean anything.

Nothing here of Dungeness. Yet, to return to the quotes at the head of the piece, Jarman's garden and the songs on Vidrio do share things: for one, an attention to detail that illuminates a point, often by means of a simple and sharp description, or action. Fratti and Tosta's soundscapes, where the focus settles on a lighted window, or a figure in the street, mirror Jarman's precise notation of the provenance of plants and objects, alongside his own feelings. Listen to ‘Cielo Falso’ (False Sky), a track Tosta says is “about not knowing what to want and trying to recognise what it is you like.” ‘Cielo Falso’ expertly describes the tensions borne of indecision. Initiated by a closed piano riff and slowly built up through the strings and synths and sax (the latter sounding like a car horn in a gridlocked street), things threaten to break loose with the introduction of a steady beat that may shadow the increasing heartbeat of the song's subject. Fratti's beautiful la-la-las here mirror the minor-major chord switches, maybe illustrating the dilemmas posed in the lyrics: “Standing in

another place / Without knowing where I am going / I forgot how to awake / The rooster sings, the rooster sings / I got attacked by another thought / I don't know how to remember..." Then there is a slow unwind, the change in key allowing some air back in. Music that is at once romantic and forensic in purpose.

The widescreen nature of this music allows for quick changes in shape and temper that are reminiscent of Jarman's lyricism in describing things, even when the subject matter seems to be fixed. Of course, gardens can be shifting entities, prone to constant change and chance. And Fratti and Tosta are becoming masters in making their music move through eloquent, playful hints, wrapped in the most flower petal-soft wrappings and illuminated by crystalline flashes of detail. 'En Paralelo' is a track that seems to be interested in squeezing what it can out of a simple rising piano coda, (one that isn't a million miles away from 'Oh! You Pretty Things': maybe its Latin American cousin). Each bar registers a little extra weight and tone, the slightly dizzy progression of notes also create an image of ascending a spiral staircase, only to suddenly melt away into the air. On 'Palacio' the piano again picks out notes to create a sense of remove that in turn sets up a surprising ending, where a sax squeals through the last bar or so like a drunken gatecrasher at a party. It's a perfect response to the rest of the track.

Jarman, Fratti and Tosta also share a spirit of openness, and a delight and wonder in the wider world. Jarman's in his passion for his immediate surroundings, Fratti and Tosta's in the empathic sound worlds they conjure up. This is immediately apparent with 'Anomina' (Anonymous), an arresting and generous opener, where the melody rises skyward, like a lark. The instrumentation is gloriously handled: the listener can revel in each element: the plod of the cello, the skeletal crash of the keys, and the shake of what sounds like brushed drums. These often slight, shards of sound are played against the beautiful melody line, where Fratti's soft and empathic voice, one that could melt snow if given a chance, sings: "Anonymous, Anonymous / Heads or tails / If I don't know who I can be, then I'm going to be my hunch / From the tip of my tongue, I jump to the sky." Gibran Andrade's slightly gated kick drum adds impasto to the simple lines sketched out by Fratti's vocal until a fabulously drunken cello part carves through the song like a thresher in a meadow. This is the first signalling of a trope that runs through the album: where slightly offkey forays into sound add a charm and a quizzical counterpoint. We are left to understand that not all is being said, and we need to be aware of that.

One could call Vidrio a jazz hybrid record, though once upon a time this music would have been called postmodern; an answer to pop's pre-packaged form, adopting maybe more classical structures to tell a story. In that, this record is reminiscent of Jarman's 1980s contemporaries, The Blue Nile, who made widescreen post-pop that ached with longing for resolutions that seemed to be just over the horizon. And for all the deconstructions, the deliberate raucousness of the sax and the rhythms of the percussion (like waves riding up a shingle beach outside Jarman's cottage), this is still a music that can thread a line back to classical opera whilst nodding along the way to the likes of Terry Riley, or bebop. Over time, and by dint of working closely together, Fratti and Tosta have reached a state of grace that only comes rarely to artists. In this space they can do no wrong: the touch, the decision-making, the clarity of the instrumentation, the knowledge where to apply the emotional press, is nothing short of breathtaking.