

SANTIAGO MONTES

Rara avis

“In danger of extinction, coherence has played an essential part in Montes’ career path. Sacrifice, devotion, suffering, solitude, unawareness, abandonment, deprivation... were just a few of the difficult challenges and unpleasant consequences which he had to face after choosing this difficult path when he found himself at his own crossroads.

This is why congruence today is somewhat of a frightened *rara avis* flying over our hedonistic and wretched society. It seems that its anachronistic hermit spirit, much like that of the monks in the early years of Christianity, requires absolute silence, the most intense darkness, prior to the breaking forth of glory and the celestial music.

COHESIVE ENERGY

The equilibrium breaks away from the chromatic analysis of his paintings, like the harmony of a well-tuned orchestra, in which each instrument plays its own score, with the audience applauding this cohesive work, this symphonic performance.

Fragments orbiting within their gravitational fields, foundations which delimit an infinite space, as if by illusion. And at the same time, these paintings themselves are remnants which are subject to the designs of a wise and just demiurge – in fact, a god, the protector of art and literature, that same god who gave the city its first olive tree, and who enjoys a chryselephantine retreat, shut away in the cella of a sober and imposing Doric temple, with their profile outlined against a radiant sky up there in the heights of the acropolis.

THE UNIVERSE IN EXPANSION

Montes may well be more accustomed to the manageability of small-scale canvases and the efficiency of acrylics, yet through the art of introspection, his pieces become somewhat of a border crossing into a universe in expansion, revealing at the same time, these unbridled gestures which occur through meditation.

A reflection prior to this trance in which energy is multiplied and channelled through the paintbrush. This alternation of centripetal and centrifugal forces, seemingly in search of a cosmic equilibrium which goes beyond the bodies’ limits.

MUSICALITY

An inveterate music lover, Montes’ abstractions can be read as if they were authentic chromatic scores. A pictorial harmony which conceals this melody; one which can only be heard if our mind is able to disregard all space-time references.

And perhaps it was this fear of letting go, of witnessing the demolition of all mental constructions, this terrifying perpetuity, that led a critic to glimpse, in the lower edge of his paintings, this blurred memory of the table, this spatial and compositional resource used for the figurative elements of his already classic still-life pieces.

DUAL AND BIPOLAR

The duality over which Montes' most recent piece has been constructed generates a certain unsettling feeling for the audience, one which is not easy to escape from. The melancholic stillness which is so characteristic of his work, and which enveloped his hazy still life pieces, alongside his masterful command of aerial perspective which allows even the invisible elements to come to light, has essentially given way to an all-out war, a titanic battle which the artist must face with his own physical and spatial limitations.

A piece which is the setting and battlefield in this struggle for survival, the place where the spectator approaches exactly as a forensic scientist would, to collect the indisputable evidence that will instruct the definitive artistic judgment.

The duality of a dark piece which is tremendously transparent, complex and extremely

evident. With each stroke, the edge of this knife which engenders and annihilates, shines through. The screams, the sobs, the cries, the wails and roars, this rattle of death looming over the clamour of battle. The murmurs before the silence. The calm before the storm. The devastated field. Empty. Music. Balance of Power. A game of chess against oneself. Checkmate. The enemy trapped in the back of his head. Checkmate. Murder with hints of suicide.

This duality devoured by an intense bipolarity. Twins becoming transformed into Siamese twins. Inside. Deep inside. Extraction and biopsy. Cannibalism. Destroy to create. Creative destruction. A phoenix. Ash from a cigarette. A piece of work that lives on in us. The proof of life. Only it will talk of us when we are dead. Life as this momentary opportunity to create transcendence.

THE PRODUCED WORK

In line with the objectives and characteristics which have been chosen for this particular series, he has also included four new pieces which have been specifically created for this area and space. Through this work he hopes to be able to bring the audience closer to the creative process, searching for a certain contextualisation of his work, taking into consideration the characteristics, dimensions and lighting of this particular space, and the way in which it can be explored.

The origin of a piece of work always begins miles away from the actual exhibition space. In the majority of cases, the public only have access to the finished product and for this reason, photographic and audio-visual documentation can be so revealing, as it gives the audience the opportunity to really bear witness to the whole process, from its very inception to the final display. The pieces produced for this exhibition, *Abstracción (I-IV)*, posed quite a challenge for the artist due to their large format. The artist was fully aware of the dimensions of the space in which these pieces would be exhibited. He was once again concerned about achieving this balance of forces and the harmonious co-existence of music and silence which mark the rhythm of the pieces. For this reason he was involved in assembling and constructing authentic gravitational fields and semi-orbits which the audience will have to follow unconsciously and inexorably, and essentially the painter has invested in creating his own universe.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOUR

The colour in Montes' work will prove seminal. An extraordinary illustrator, the artist gradually abandons line-work in order to capture this compositional freedom in which colour is the protagonist. Unique and unrepeatable colours, dreamt up by the tireless mind of this painter and from the intimacy of this study where the privileged visitor is able to discover this revelation, the true dimension of this creator.

Because, under this apparent chaos and seemingly uncontrolled explosion, the meticulous and carefully worked out architectural study is concealed, with the sets of checks and balances, the distribution of strengths and pressures exercised by each individual colour. All great constructions aim to live on, to outlive their maker, to strive for immortality”.