

Of painting and of nature

If we do not see things in their essence but only in their abstract and empty shape, they will not move our sensitivity. We have to give them our own feelings, our own spiritual self to get an answer, said Schelling nearly two centuries ago, who tried to link 'concepts of the soul' in painting with nature. Not taking into consideration, that it might be an apriorism in which so many artist have found themselves reflected in; very few will nevertheless overcome the real limit established by the prophetic author of "Art's relation with nature", which remains a debate of constant reflection. Between that position, linked with another double search which associates apparent reality and its most transcendent refraction in emptiness and silence or in solitude, and the references given by his most admired and indispensable writers, Darya von Berner's paintings seem to penetrate a timeless paradigm or a space without images responding to fleeting news.

To feel oneself, reflected in a landscape without words, or in one of Tarkovskys eloquent and vaporous atmosphere, whilst leading ones proustian nostalgia towards a refined vision of painting, to its origins, or if you like, to a particular prehistory of painting. Then reality was closer, and real life, urban landscapes as well as countryside, were associated with one of the great magicians of Spanish realism, Antonio López, although Darya von Berner intended already to take her excursions in "plein air" further, confronting appearances, which were caught between obsessive passing lights, and the breaking of the irregular support structure, which was another way to confirm an imagined emptiness or a sugestión of an unfinished continuity. Or perhaps, as she thinks, to see her self painted in a hyperbolical transmutation by the tree she was watching. She adopted a traditional Spanish style with a new freshness, like the one of Realism, which originated in the Baroque, with Zurbaran's and Velasquez mysticism, and she not only renewed its debate but she diluted its austerity with references to specific fragments, which allowed her to break formal limits, creating new formats, precarious remnants of paintings, real splintered poems from nature.

This alchemy, in which she believes, incited her at the time to transcend reality beyond its proper dimension, over a simplified vision, which some art critics had at the time, to go towards other ideas which started to conciliate her particular system of antagonisms, a naturalistic appearance and a more radical thought. And this came about after watching nature and thinking about the space surrounding her, about all sort of things that condition her life at any moment, something she has never abandoned, that somehow now take her work through different paths which are never far from her original convictions.

And if I quoted Schelling at the beginning I did not do it without a purpose. Darya von Berner participated in his debate and will undoubtedly be able to abstract form and emptiness after observing and pondering landscape and nature. An exercise that she shares with her favorite poets and fiction writers. This is a method that allows her to maintain a certain distance from the space she inhabits, going instead to an elevated supreme idea.

And it is this ideal, which forces her to create these very special compositions that are sometimes out of focus, sometimes they keep a symmetrical vision, using monocromatic tones as a way to express transcendental experiences.

It is like trying to show the different sediments of thought, of solitude and emptiness, that the painter looks for in the rigorous isolation in which she keeps herself when working. The emptiness born in the ominous open oak grove lands of Extremadura, in “plein air” interrupted by the unsettling presence of a tractor, intellectualized later in the first Parisian workshop of Maraichers, between the Baroque obscurity, the cold and unattainable severity of the space she used to inhabit and the reconsideration of Klein, reread often by the artist, who thought after reading Bachelard that blue was obscurity made visible. From that dark space, with all its allegorical support in “tenebrist” austerity and purifying accessibility, that the painter had found in Paris, which was opposed to a central image, a personal literary transcription which helped to fix the place in her memory she made, after an initiating “Máquina d’un homme”, the Maraichers “Exvotos” or the “15 mars 88” now part of the Santa Luca Insurance Collection. Reconciliation between content and lack of content, between image and its negation in the middle of a minimalist emptiness –even if it is not related with a minimal style- between objective nature and the experimental territoriality of physical matter which is going to purify even more her Summer meditation in the middle of the Lugo mountains, where white is substituted by black, giving confidence to her original project, started earlier on in her new workshop in panting in Paris. Between the mist and the bleak Caurel mountains, between the rocky landscape, the forest and the streams, Darya von Berner went even further in her very radical project which we have already referred to, developing a work able to harmonize, from the pantheist view she takes, and again we have to refer to Schelling the merging of her spirit with nature –seen so many times by the primitives as a hierophany- which she strips and the huge white space penetrating from the horizon into the picture. This is the space which is now illuminated not only by the physical presence of light but also by a thought which allows her to see, as did the Romantics, the landscape as the soul’s condition, between readings of English laquist poets, and a spiritual and sacred apprehend ion of her surroundings, as Eliade defended. From the mythical Diana and Olympia who gave their names to the pictures made in Lugo, the quietness, a preestablished stillness of the image which centers or not centers to great emptiness, changes he course of the meditative and contemplative process of the painter. Shelley –who said that the color of the blood of sensitivity was blue, interpreted by Klein in a different way from Darya von Berner. And Coleridge, between the new dimension of “ozimandias” and “Kahn Kubka”, and E. Dickenson associated with her “Don’t forget Anfitrite”, helped her to establish a special reading, discovering the minimalist keys of Malevich’s spiritual risk or from the last Romantic painter, as she likes to call Rothko, to penetrate in another thought even quitter related to that contemplating territory which had already entranced Michaux in his “Jardin exalte”, an imagined Far East in the middle of a subtle Zen quitness between music, branches and trees foliage, Beyond there, in the background there is another thought, imageless, a huge white space, like a dark and transparent wall which at the same time is not related to minimalist theories but to the ultra sensitive and religious of the painter who made a white picture against a white background.

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