

Nacer Igual

I

Long ago I set out to understand beauty and harmony. I hoped to understand how we react individually and collectively to that which is harmonious and beautiful and that which lacks harmony and beauty.

The search for answers eventually raised new questions. This is the dynamic of my life, as well as my work, which has provided the means to approach these questions. In other words, because I do not have a preconceived idea of the way to go, I give form to certain images. In this creative process, it is only when the work is complete that I am able to frame the question. I must then present my work to others to verify it and give it meaning.

Recognizing the desired image is a challenge. In the process of creating a work, there comes a time when a certain balance is reached between myself and the various elements of that work, which I call the stabilization moment. The meaning of the piece is a blend of intuition, intention and the materials used. Once the piece is finished a second process starts, a process that can eventually transform the work. This second step involves other people, other critical points of view. It is only after the work has been interpreted by others that it is ready to be set on stage. I have often realized that if the piece cannot enter the imagination, it will not succeed for others or for me. Experience has taught me to distinguish intuition from intention. It is then easier to create forms that can be interpreted and experienced by others the way I envisioned them. This process is very mysterious

II

This catalogue presents a series of my latest works, “Nacer igual” (2001) exhibited at Ruth Benzacar’s Art

Gallery. It includes pieces I have previously shown. In chronological order the pieces are: “Corner Pieces (1998) and “Obrador” (1999) shown at Ruth Benzacar Art Gallery in Buenos Aires (1999); the exhibition “Llegar ahora” at the David Perez-Mac Collum Art Gallery in Guayaquil, Ecuador (2001) in which the following pieces were presented: “Límites”(1982), “Partida” (1981), “Pesadillas”(1995-2000), “Finalmente dijo sí”(2000), 9 watercolors on paper (1999), “Reparaciones: aferrarse-insaciable-ira-castigo”(2000) and “El camino de los seis santos”(1999 and 2000). “Forma roja-reparación” (2001) and “Rosa-reparación”(2001) presented at the itinerating group show “Campo the juego” at the Centro Cultural Recoleta Buenos Aires, Centro de Extensión Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Bahía Blanca, Argentina.

Because I approach my work autobiographically, my experiences, maturity, emotions, knowledge and skill define my idea of art.

The works in this catalogue arise from different situations. For example, “Obrador” is a piece I had planned to do during the eighties, but was only able to start and complete during 1998 and 1999. I started “Corner pieces” during 1995 and was able to complete it during 1997; it was only then that I knew that the elements that constitute the installation piece –ceramics and blankets– belonged together.

The exhibition called “Llegar ahora” is comprised of pieces from different periods. It did not pretend to be a retrospective but rather an exploration of various themes. The exposition was articulated around the drawings called “Reparación”. “Reparacion” consisted of revision of the past in the present and to that end I used my own memories as well as collective memories. This diverse exhibition was a reflection of different experiences presented simultaneously.

“Forma roja-reparaciones” and “Rosa reparación” were done in a period between the exhibits “Llegar ahora” and “Nacer igual”. I feel that their meaning hinges on the notion of repair in order to articulate a new and complete body.

“Nacer igual” is a series of drawings and paintings. They relate to a new form arising, a body or a shape, which is able to build its own memory. Simple drawings on paper and monochromatic abstract paintings (acrylic on canvas) are presented side by side. In both cases I tried to apply minimum resources. Both the drawing and the painting have a strong centered image, and when set together the total composition is double centered. As spectators we are unable to focus on either of them at once and so the image does not seem to be resolved except by a quick fluctuation of consciousness and gazing that reorganizes a place for understanding.

The pieces presented in this catalogue encompass more than 20 years of work.

III

The pieces mentioned above deal with my place of origin, Bariloche-Patagonia, where I grew up in a family of recent immigrants. The deserted nature of the lately conquered Patagonia, enabled me to establish a sensation of an emptied out land or of an empty body. I drew an analogy of two bodies, my own and a Patagonian body. I understand now that since 1997 I have been working on how to complete an emptied out body. A complete and live body does not need to relate exclusively to its origins or to its past, but can simply act out its present, in doing so it cannot elude the fact that as all living thing it is defined by a specific context.

One of the first consequences a body experiments as it begins to feel complete is the fear of expressing itself, because it still does not know how to do that. At that point, the body does not yet know what it is to be complete, and therefore does not know how to express the newly acquired presence. “Obrador” represents that situation, and “Corner pieces” represents the difficulty of naming that which is so new.

I used ceramics in “Corner pieces” for many different reasons. They reminded me of those strange porcelain

figures of the Far East that at first do not let us Westerners know what they mean, but later reveal themselves as trees or dragons. These elements play with the ambiguity of shapes that are slightly organic, vegetable or mineral and which, because of their weight, colors and shine, relate to certain decorative things which reminded me of houses belonging to the last century’s bourgeoisie. I used the blankets because they relate to sleeping, dreaming, and loss of consciousness.

“Obrador” is composed of only light, texts and sounds, which can be heard or read. Except for the texts that I borrowed from different poets, there are no precisely finished or delineated figurative elements in either of these last two works. These represent a repertoire of incipient and slightly defined sketches that permit diverse interpretations.

“Reparacion” was the second stage of the work. For the show “Llegar ahora”, I drew babies as a way of repairing my own thoughts, dreams and feelings. The abstract paintings on the other hand enabled me to create similar yet slightly different settings for constructive, spatial, and emotional interpretations.

“Límites” (1982) is a circular shape, composed of a wood dust line in purple color and 4 structures built in wood, carpenters clamps and wire. The structures, which relate to transportation, construction and fencing, circle an empty space.

9 watercolors (1999) represent some of the ceramics of “Corner pieces”. They depict those shapes in such a way that one cannot really distinguish figure from shadow. Around each watercolor, I wrote four words related to different things. The puzzled spectator finds himself searching for precise references that will allow him to define what he is seeing. And therefore, the empty spaces in the circle of “Límites” articulate a dialogue with the colorful center of the watercolors.

“Partida” (1981) functions with two swinging lamps that project unstable shadows and lights over some thin paper boats that float on black and white archive photographs representing different times and persons that emigrate freely or otherwise. It appeals very directly to our emotions and fragility. In a pendulum-like motion it projects and recovers us from some crucial departure belonging to either the past or the future.

“Finalmente dijo Sí” (2000) is a relatively cheerful piece, a relaxing moment compared to the intense situations implied in some of the other pieces in the show. It relates to sexual differences, and is built as if it were a strange homemade handicraft. Keys, curtain cords, and cloth are placed on and near a wall painted with a black geometrical design.

The five “Pesadillas” were done in two stages. I cut out part of the black papers during 1995, but could do nothing with them then because they felt like pure nightmares. They felt like indescribably terrible dreams. It was only in 2001 that I could cut out a second part for each composition and set them together so that each one became a unique reflected image.

The paintings titled “El camino de los seis santos” (1999-2002) are similar paintings, done in different sizes at different times. They are positioned in such a way that the spectator does not know if he already saw that image or not. This series of paintings remains a work in progress.

“Forma Roja - reparación (desastre-aferrarse)” was presented in the group show “Campo de Juego”. The large red piece of painted wood is an intense expressionistic figure, much larger than my body. With its vertical surge I intended to create a state of balance with the tension of the baby drawings.

“Rosa - reparación” consists of a pink abstract painting and two baby drawings, which to me put on scene equilibrium between the masculine and feminine side in each of us.

I installed convex mirrors in the exhibition “Llegar ahora” and “Campo de Juego.” These mirrors reflect a new image that is perceived with new perspectives. They reflect at once a very large area that had never before been so perceived.

The babies in “Reparación” seem more abstract or conceptual compared to the babies in “Nacer igual.” The text that appears above each baby does not allow it to become complete, as if it were more of an idea than a baby. I tried to make the babies in “Nacer igual” look real, so that their literal sense could contrast strongly with the abstractions in the monochromatic paintings they are presented with.

IV

Putting together this commentary and the accompanying documentation constitutes a third instance of this search for a body able to express its completeness. The facts precede the interpretation, but these have probably been part of the initial intuitions that enabled me to create the works. I understand that my interpretation is just one of many possible interpretations and is by no means definitive.

Representation, and on another level, that which is sacred are issues which occupy my mind and my work. The emergence of power and abuse of power or violence also worry me. I try to articulate some of these public and private concerns through my works. Unavoidably, those works exist within the context of the similarities and differences I share with my contemporaries. In different societies, contemporary art determines a political position both of the works themselves and of the society that displays the works.

Mónica Giron
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