

Sensations of an Encounter

Perhaps sensing the response, H. approached me timidly about writing on Mónica Giron's latest work, the monumental *Neocriollo*. –“No, but thanks for asking,” and some excuse would bring the topic to a close. What a relief. One must keep a distance from the *Neocriollo*. It attracts as much as it frightens. That piece of wax, molded inch by inch for more than a year, is still an enigma, a formless community of moving bodies and eyes, or hellish embryos condemned to eternal spasms and convulsions. A swarming beehive of blue eyes looking out incessantly, the ominous eyes of the ancient Sumerian gods, with their nude torsos and their primitive baldness, eternally witnessing the daily toil of man.

Stroke on stroke, fingerprint on fingerprint, hot iron on wax, clusters of heads. Fragile in its abundance or indestructible in its mass of extremities, the figure seems wrapped in fire, amidst stitches and sutures; the searing touch of metal accompanies its birth. Disturbing, haughtily serene, materially ductile, vigorously present. Intriguing birthing woman with dark hallows, ruminant repetitions, crystalline silence.

Giron molding. An image both recent and ancient, with singular resonances, mirrored matrices, hidden skeletons; rock and fossil, mountain and reef, topography of time, alchemy of space, wandering of the soul. Extreme sensations, offering or sacrifice, deformation or metamorphosis. A fraternal contact with sculpture and its heirs, and with the object and its meanings. Lost wax, the return of craft, the detour of the studio to past eras and manual learning. Layer on later, remain on remain, the *Neocriollo* –insatiable but patient– demands more veils for its skin, more care for its feelings. Giron carries on her painstaking ritual, mark on mark, gesture on gesture.

I remember the first encounter. Her studio was calm and neat. The light was pale. Perhaps it was a summer dusk. Covered in secrets, rooted in ground, giant in appearance, the *Neocriollo*, in a corner, expectant, looked mysterious, impossible to predict. Accustomed to Giron's moves, I knew I was before one of her mutations. Strange artist, always between unlikely trips. The previous stories had simply foretold the fatigue of work, the habitual obsession, the insistence of ideas and trials, of complications and confusions, of enthusiasm and pleasures seized day by day, step by step.

I was prepared to feel lost, to find myself surrounded by sensations and inexplicable demands. I was still at ease with the tenderness and fear I felt looking at her drawings of enormous newborns, floating on empty sheets of paper, illuminated by the marginalia of red, yellow, green and blue geometries, shiny from thick oil paint.

As on other occasions, silence was the most fitting –or the only possible– response to the unknown and the incomprehensible. I needed time. Giron's art always needs time. The problem does not lie in surprise, but in the density of the giving over. There are no shortcuts, nothing in evidence that speeds up the presentation. There are no remarks that ease the encounter with her otherworldly imaginary.

Following her course amidst steely Buenos Aires rumors, the long Baltic nights and the Patagonian vastness, one can sense many solitary dialogues cloaked in pencil, ceramic, soil, blanket, bark and tissue. Yet, her workings come from less visible dimensions, from murmurings sunned by inner journeys, by hallucinations that pulsate neither in dream nor wakefulness. To be passenger of the stars and nomad of meanings entails other wanderings and lodgings.

Line on line, trying to put off the meeting. But, the *Neocriollo* is now inescapable.

On that afternoon in the studio and also today, another summer afternoon, as I sit before its wondrous, eyeless body varnished in light and shadow, a body perplexed but possible to caress and hold, cast in the solidity of bronze, the *Neocriollo* continues to steal all words. Small and stable, rendered object, stripped of its wax membranes and blinded, yet still, in this state, exiled to a daily coexistence, the *Neocriollo* returns with its otherworldly powers. The stupor grows and the image of its origin shines. The nightmare multiplies. The morphology of the *Neocriollo* broadens and shows its expansions.

There is no refuge or homey silence; there is no weakness or domestic simplicity to give oneself over to calm and indolence. Like a pupa always in springtime, the *Neocriollo* replicates itself in the course of its mundane life. Not even the strength of bronze can stop the variations in its bodies and smells. Metal becomes useless, fire, which once molded it, now returns, immune, vital and provocative, from the furnace's flames; with curves winding and gentle, it sits, weighty and categorical, on turbulent base. The nourishing root that connects it to its original being, which rests, opulent, in the artist's studio, is also an illusive extension that holds it up. A perfect artifact that journeyed from transparent wax to the flaming tension of bronze.

More detours to avoid the primary discovery, the primary fear before the *Neocriollo*, with its thousand blue eyes and hundreds of heads.

Wordless and trapped amidst its forms, before the bared humanity of its quavering and primary dawn, a sense of welcoming or expulsion, expression or emptiness. The presence of another dimension, the possibility of desire, the call of the senses and sentiment, the actions of the soul and the body. A nascent being, constructed layer on layer, lit by the heat of the fire, its glimmers of wax radiant. A body, and endless bodies, given over to the gift of their own existence; shared knowledge and peaceful gaze recognizing the other in its difference, savoring the astral and the earthy. One and many, the *Neocriollo* was born years ago when Xul Solar, follower of the occult and astrology, created a new artificial language and revealed the singular metamorphosis of the man of the future.

Soon thereafter, the astrologer –imagined by Leopoldo Marechal–, who painted on occasion, described the *Neocriollo* on the pages of *Adán Buenosayres*.

“...I did not invent the *Neocriollo*: the *Neocriollo* is, rather, the natural product of the astrological forces that rule this country,” said Xul / Schultze calmly. He explained that the *Neocriollo* will have periscopic eyes (the right one will make him a saint and the left one a scientist); its right ear will hear heavenly music and its left one earthly music, but both will be shaped like microphonic funnels; its nose will breath the furor of destruction on one side and the furor of life on the other; its tongue will be a long a flexible band, an organ of taste and expression. Its skin a great surface with gatherings and folds. The *Neocriollo* will also have five senses of Action and one of Feeling. The word, the hands, the feet, the digestive tract and the instruments of generation will be the organs of Action; devoid of logic and grammar, its language will be poetic and metaphysical, and it will feed on scents and dews.

Concerned, Valdez, the engineer, had already warned Xul:

—“You go around inventing everything. First the Argentines’ language, then the national ethnography, and now music. Beware! I see you holding a monkey wrench in your hand, trying to loosen the wrist pins of the Solar System.”

—“The Great Demiurge” –answered Schultze– “sets the example by incessantly altering his work.”

Mónica Giron decided to explore Argentina’s astrological chart, and molded a *Neocriollo* that goes from agony to resurrection, from tenderness to horror, from home to exile. The clamoring of the giant is heard between the Sun and the Moon, between Saturn and Mars. Coexistence impossible, distance unthinkable. Perhaps metamorphosis will bring restitution. The *Neocriollo*, impassible, from fog and light, with neither promise nor prophecy. The time of revelation has yet to come.

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