

## Carlos Pascual. "Presencias reales"

Del 4 de enero al 10 de febrero 2012

"Remember that a painting – before being a war horse, a nude woman or just an anecdote – is a flat surface covered with organized colours in accordance with a certain order.

Maurice Denis

Definition of neotraditionism, 1980

Without mysteries or secrets, the works by Carlos Pascual (Madrid, 1950) are offered to us for what they are: things. Spatial objects whose main purpose does not lie in representation but in the presentation of themselves and in its material nature. *Real Presences*- the title given to this first exhibition of the painter in Astarté Gallery of Art- are openly offered to any spectator who being patient enough will manage to pass from a merely perceptive onlooker to a receptor able to know by intuition the slight gestural containment palpating in each of these formal abstractions similar to that archaic smile warmly drawn in greek kouros or koré faces which -by the way- so much fascinate our artist.

The three-dimensional form acquired by some of his latest works are settled on supports whose thickness means that each image is to be looked through and not only just to be seen.

The works of Carlos Pascual evolve towards cubes and constructive compositions that blend the limits between sculpture and painting, and recover the solid and yet simple form of painting as an object.

The works of this painter from Madrid have always extended within abstraction, inquiring into possibilities and going beyond the diverse historical and artistic tendencies by which he has been influenced. His plastic exploration has taken him through multiple and divergent paths that go from the revision of the first avant-garde movements to the formalist theories of Greenberg and Fried or the minimalist propositions of Judd among others.

### When the fact gives way to a possibility

The title of this exhibition, *Real Presences*, implies much more connotations than those that are perceived at first sight. If we take into account the concept "presences" we might wonder what the painter wants to convey by this. It is true that an object is a presence, but it is nevertheless true that the term is more commonly accepted as referring to people or a living being. In that sense, a confrontation emerges between a concept of presence considered as the experience of something alive and palpating and a second concept relating it with fact, the real (an idea that approaches a lifeless object, its material nature and specific shape). In "What we see, what is looking at us" by Georges Didi-Huberman, the author makes a reflection about the apparent contradiction between form and presence and makes himself the question "What is a form with presence?"

The work of Carlos Pascual is an approach as well as an exploration of this dilemma. As we meet and coexist with his works they make us think not only of the *dasein* (being there) but also of the *mitdasein* (being there with). Their presence is

not passive. As we comprehend them we understand ourselves, as we look at them we see ourselves.

Their apparent factuality gives way to possibility.

We are brought face to face with painting by playing at surpassing the limits of painting, objects absorbed in the inquiry into the notion of object: *real presences* that exist now and here. Quoting Mallarmé : "The moment of an object notion is then the moment of reflection about its pure present in itself or its present purity".

### Made to measure puzzles

The anthropomorphic scale, that is to say, the relation between the artistic objects' size and that of human beings is one of the features allowing works with a reductive language like the ones of our artist to become so dialectical.

In general terms, when the onlooker encounters a small sized artistic object he tends to undervalue it but if he runs into a huge monumental sized work of art the most common reaction is one of sublimation and intimidation. Nevertheless when the artistic object equals human size, then it becomes something close to us, the ones looking at it, even when its formal language might be that of the most radical abstraction as used to happen with Tony Smith or Robert Morris *minimal* sculptures and that also happens with Carlos Pascual works.

Our artist always aims for formats easy to look at, for face to face to face confrontation. The size of his works neither overwhelms nor remains unnoticed but fosters all our interest in the pure visual experience of colour fields – frequently monochrome- where external references do not exist.

On the other hand, the attractive compositions that we can find at this exhibition take us to some extent to the neoplasticism geometrical abstraction or either the constructivism, although most of them result from a juxtaposition of painted pieces individually created and joined together like a puzzle that forms itself by intuition and *a posteriori* without following the dictates of any mathematical geometry, articulating themselves at different height, thickness and finished by superimposing painted panels, and layers of colour,

Carlos Pascual puts across different degrees of expressivity: It is common to see how he sometimes faces the various intense chromatic fields but just as common is his calculated methodology in order to simplify the expressivity contained in his gesture. His work sets off from the elementary and reaches a complexity that is reflected not only in these assemblies but also in our experience in front of them.

If we take the position of *men in the belief* we will look at these works as an *inside* but if we take the role of *men of the tautology* we will always take them as an *in front of*. The best thing to do is to reconsider our condition of spectators and as Didi-Huberman says to confront them as an *in front of-inside*. A singular scheme of open and closed space at the same time.

Jennifer Calles