

Enrique Marty and much more than the family, Rafael Doctor

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I first came across the work of Enrique Marty through his gallery's annual showcase at Arco. That first encounter aroused a sentiment in me. At first I thought it was repulsion, and then I decided that they were unpleasant paintings and sculptures, nothing more. "I don't like that", I said to myself, and yet I couldn't get that feeling out of my head. I finally decided to let that undefined feeling seduce me. It is not that I liked it, but it attracted me too much and I found it too difficult to admit that the other world being represented was also my own. A meeting with the artist when I was invited to introduce his work in a small book reaffirmed my conviction: Marty's work provoked me more than I cared to admit. Crossing the threshold of his studio in Salamanca with Jose one summer morning was the point of no return. Both José (with whom I share the best things that life has to offer) and I wrote two stories for Enrique. I was so involved in his fascinating work that I refused (as I normally do with what interests me) to perform a cold study or rhetorical examination of the images. When someone asks you to write for a catalogue, mainly what they want is your by-line, which supposedly lends backing to the status of the art.

Secondly, they want an opaque text in which you talk about everything and nothing, a few paragraphs which nobody is ever going to read and whose sole purpose is to fill out the artist's CV in the "texts written for" section. We adopted a different approach - to become involved in and part of the work through a game of reciprocal seduction. Now it was José and myself who tried, through our tales, to trap Enrique so that he would see that we wanted to be part of his game. It worked so well that I now find it difficult to shake off everything that Enrique is trying to say. Now I feel that his work is mine, and that is one of the most beautiful feelings that a person working in my line, organising and planning projects and exhibitions, can have. The stories complemented Enrique's world view (to perfection, in my opinion). The book came out and we quickly set to work, planning a large exhibition. This was born "La familia", one of the most daring (if not the most daring) exercise in narrative painting ever performed in Spain. It was at Espacio Uno at the Reina Sofia National Museum (transformed since the days when I had the freedom to establish my thinking and practices about artistic creation) where we tried to take the exercise to its ultimate consequences. Since then there have been other exhibitions and other projects that we have brought to a satisfactory conclusion. However, I can't forget that exhibition in the Reina Sofia, where nearly four hundred pictures and a slew of sculptures shook the unwary visitor, who would be paralysed by a spectacle which he or she would never have expected on a placid stroll through the museum.

Images upon images, one after another, ordered, screams and readings in a pile, making it impossible to grasp anything concrete. A catharsis of painting and all pure representation through scene after scene and a radical positioning vis-à-vis the role to be played today by someone who defines themselves as an artist because they have something specific to tell the world around them. That exhibition was essentially an exercise in honesty, in which I was capable (I felt) of stripping the artist completely and demanding that he give much more of himself than he expected, much more than even he knew he had in him. The game became such a daring feat that it totally defined the painter's position and established a style which distinguishes him from the rest of contemporary painting.

The paintings are all on cheap chipboard, the pictures always direct and violent, the scenes trenchant and compressing everyday magical states where what we know as sinister, dark and indecorous claimed a primordial place in the world we inhabit on a daily basis. The family was everything, but it was not what was expected, yet it was not a circus or a forced attempt to create a spectacle. Marty created something different with such everyday elements that, ultimately, the meaning of spectacular, forced, grandiloquent, brilliant, faded before the evidence of his sincere, direct discourse: "Ladies and gentlemen.

Look at me, I tell you no lies. This is my world; is it not also yours?"

I like to talk about references with which the artist is comfortable: David Lynch, Cronenberg, gore movies, Channel47 with Lola the fortune-teller, El Gran Polvo, the Golem, etc. Nevertheless, there is no comparison. There is no love for painting or sculpture, nor even a narrative urge. There is only an effect and communication. What is best and most important is to want to tell, not to stop shouting. The modern-day artist must speak or be silent. He who claims a place must position himself or sit down once and for all. He who shouts must define his song. He who weeps must show his wounds, and he who wanders should please rest and claim his place when he has calmed down. The modern-day artist must speak or be silent. He who claims a place must position himself or sit down once and for all. He who shouts must define his song. He who weeps must show his wounds, and he who wanders should please rest and claim his place when he has calmed down. I am struck by the fact that the radical defenders of painting in Spain do not want to let themselves be seduced by this opus. It is the clearest evidence that the powers-that-be despise anything that speaks and, in particular, that which they do not like.

"Up with painting", they cry, yet all they want to do is continue building the HISTORY OF ART FOR OVER MY COUCH AND THE HISTORY OF ART AS A JINGLE OF MODERNITY with which many like myself do not wish to be associated. Marty's work speaks of the present, and there is scarcely any reference to a pictorial past. This may be another reason for ignoring him. Marty's work is a pure cry in favour of painting as one of the forms of representation that is most alive, but it is not a declaration of painting qua painting. That is meaningless in a present which seeks to communicate and which is aware that tools are only utensils. The mediocre take refuge in their books and build memory through the rot that is left by the moths. The contemporary artist goes to a square, takes a canonical book which does not affect him in the slightest, places it in the centre, and then sweetly shits on it. Finally, he wastes no time spreading his turd. He waits and recognises his time. The contemporary artist weeps with the honesty granted by his challenge, since he knows about innards, he knows how difficult it is to denude oneself, he knows that everything is against him, he knows that he is right by virtue of the moment of history which belongs to him. His voice is silenced yet he persists in his song, which is no other than a continuous complaint about a world of customs, restrictions and, above all, castrations. The artist of today does not care about modernity, since there is nothing worse than being modern at a time when there is no modernity but only the truth which implores the day and the individual situation. To wander is always an option.