

Retazos (*Fragments*)

Lorenzo Valverde

1. Some of my pictures are attempts to create mental landscapes, worlds that are trapped between reality and fiction. These are works that focus on something that eludes our language, an echo or a moment preceding the term that cannot be grasped in language. It is the moment when the mind believes to understand something, to grasp something, and tries to make this grasping available in words, but also puts the certainty of its knowledge in question and rebels successfully against a final linguistic fixation.

2. Partially influenced by the ideas of Félix de Azúa, it seems to me that what is now referred to as political art, is nothing more than “politically correct” art: a simple extension of the “mass media”, characterized by their educational and seductive features, an art which in many cases is varnished with a technical modernity, while it accepts the submissive, consumption-oriented states of the global society in order to create satisfied and indifferent individuals who accept a fate that allows them a little opportunity of active participation.

3. When I paint, I work with signs. Often I cut up the canvas of the image, construct the image from pieces of canvas or connect the fragments with adhesive tape. This way of working helps me to sweep the first meaning out of the way. The pictures remain extremely reduced in this phase, there are only traces. The resulting concentration on something nearly unknown to me establishes the necessary tension for me.

4. John Berger said in his first book, “A Painter of Our Time”, London 1958, that the creator, in whatever discipline, seldom knows what he is doing, because he is busy with the immediate problems that show up, and he has only a vague idea of what comes next.

And this vague idea, this fog, is what you have to go through to get to the clarity, the process that we look at as if we admire a sculpture by Giacometti or read a poem by Leopardi.

5. I never had the good manners of a painter. In fact, I always thought of the canvas as a boxing ring. The painting comes out of my body. Sometimes it strikes, usually at the moment of stagnation. From early on, I learned to get rid of the superfluous in my painting, and over time, I also realized that nothing I thought I knew is irrefutable. I try to design my paintings in such a way that they appear to the viewer as unfinished as if the eye was robbed of part of the picture. Thus, the viewer is invited to complete the picture himself.

6. The provisional nature of my pictures is important to me. Often, the structure and meaning of the pictures are motivated from diametrically opposed positions: neglected and elegant, poetic and vulgar, heavy and weightless, brave and modest.

7. In 1949 Marcel Duchamp restored the fine membrane between art and language (West Coast Duchamp, Bonnie Clearwater, ed., Grassfield Press, Miami Beach, 1991):

“Art can never be adequately defined because the translation of an aesthetic emotion into a verbal description is as inaccurate as your description of fear when you have been actually scared.

By 'Art for All', or 'Art for the Few', we mean that everybody is welcome to look freely at all works of art and try to hear what I call an aesthetic echo. We also imply that art cannot be understood through the intellect, but is felt through an emotion presenting some analogy with a religious faith or a sexual attraction — an aesthetic echo. (...) The important point here is to differentiate taste from the aesthetic echo.

Taste gives a sensuous feeling, not an aesthetic emotion. Taste presupposes a domineering onlooker who dictates what he likes and dislikes, and translates it into 'beautiful' and 'ugly' when he is sensuously pleased or displeased.

Quite differently, the 'victim' of an aesthetic echo is in a position comparable to that of a man in love, or of a believer, who dismisses automatically his demanding ego and, helpless, submits to a pleasurable and mysterious constraint. While exercising his taste, he adopts a commanding attitude. When touched by the aesthetic revelation, the same man, in an almost ecstatic mood, becomes receptive and humble.”