

## Fruit painting

Carlos Franco belongs to a generation of artists that appeared during the 1970s, basically around the Amadís gallery in Madrid. It is a generation of artists usually known as the “Madrilenian new figuration”. During the years in which Spain was opening up to democracy and institutional normality, Carlos Franco and his fellow artists defended the painting as something with a value in itself (as opposed to the previous generation of artists for whom political commitment was imposed upon the artistic activity), relating it -in this sense- to hypotheses of the historical avant-garde as well as an international trend which, especially in Europe, was pursuing a regeneration of the painting in its own artistic tradition beyond other types of hypothesis, as part of a figurative trend that -during the 1980s- would gradually be imposed both in Spain and in Europe in general.

Their interest in colour and experimentation has led them to work with all types of methods and materials, ranging from the most traditional to digital. They have never been afraid of pure colours that seemed to break up harmonies rich in their changes of direction, but which always came together to form other superior harmonies. Above all this, however, special attention must be given to their great talent for drawing. Many of their compositions become an encounter between an always refined drawing, especially in its distortions; a drawing that takes pleasure from its elegance, and a use of colour that has a different approach to such an encounter, losing none of its independence or brilliance.

All of this is applied to an ever-harmonious world, in which the characters from disparate and complementary worlds, live in landscapes and spaces, when not only coexisting in a painting, which at times is just patches of colour. There is a casual demeanour, in which the classical antiquity and mythological characters seem to be just visiting in the paintings, their solemnity diminished, willing to share a mountain landscape with apostles or other lesser deities, even those from more unfamiliar mythologies. Because magic is also present in all its figurations, opening up doors to mystery and worlds evoked in all their strength and all their significance.

When Zeus has given the mythological gods permission to be free, it is as if they congregate in Carlos Franco's paintings to drink tea in a harem or share leisure activities and riverbanks with a refined list of saints, full of suggestions. Nothing about Carlos Franco seems to be left to chance, not even those encounters that never cease to lead us to famous chapters and moments in the history of art, literature...

As it has been said, images may therefore arise in these encounters which, with the prestige and forcefulness of their symbolic imagery, have remained in our collective memory. But also, as opposed to this more or less prestigious world that sinks its roots into the history of the painting, in the iconography of our different traditions, we have a glimpse of paths that -when retraced- may lead us to the comic and the forcefulness of its images, or to the magic of the Tarot and other more mysterious dark types of magic. Because everything seems to be at play: dreams, memories, interpretations, visions...

and finally this heterogeneous ensemble comes together by virtue of a painting that seems to want to tell us stories it can never finish.

In these paintings by Carlos Franco, everything is in dispute with the strength and forcefulness that good painting provides. A type of painting that, like a drawing, does not wish to show off but joins this world with a kind of simultaneity, like a dream in which everything converges and moves while the images seen and suggested try to remain still.

The drawing in Carlos Franco's works deserves to be mentioned separately. Not only the drawing in his paintings which, as we have already mentioned, seems at times to play a game parallel to the game of colour, but also drawing as a genre, as Carlos' work of a draughtsman is important and his drawings -quite sufficient in themselves- form a concept that runs through his work in different ways and different styles.

We could say that the drawing in Carlos Franco's work is a narrative drawing, one that tells a story, unconcerned with perfection or imperfections, one that spills onto the paper all it needs to tell. It is emphatic and delicate, paying attention to the different techniques and materials, and giving the viewer an almost tactile feeling of the outlines, combined -with some reservation- with the superposition of planes when not openly by the temptation of colour.

For the masters of the Renaissance, drawing was what came before art, before sculptures, painting and architecture, closer to the idea than the execution. For Carlos Franco, however, drawing takes on an opulence, it takes pleasure in itself, its techniques and in the adventure of telling a story, in being allowed to wander through the memories of the comic and the most hypercultural iconographic tradition.

This exhibition has been called Fruit painting to evoke a most appropriate image. The freshness of fruit with its colours, its sensuality, a fragrance that lingers... but also its naturalness, a simplicity that evokes mysteries of distant lands where the sun and rain are the origin of a life that sinks its roots into deep fertile soils. And fruit also seen from the point of view of our western traditions, as a symbol of sin, life and love.

Carlos Franco's paintings successfully bring together all these mysteries, these worlds that magically and simultaneously open up before us, providing a feast for the eyes with suggestions such as fragrances with colours. There is no drama in fruit: its glossiness, texture, fragrance and juicy flavour brings us to the here and now, as occurs with these paintings by Carlos Franco.

**Pablo Jiménez Burillo, noviembre 2018**