

MASTER OF LIGHTNESS

In Carlos Franco's work there is a clear indication of his intense interest in the history of painting, which he embodies by distancing himself from an antiquated or purely monumental determination. C.F.'s particular sensitivity could be categorised within mannerism in which melancholic conflicts (the representation of pain that a landscape of ruins creates around a figure: black mirrors, looks that only see earth, complete abandonment of elements of geometry and reason) are manifested in the sheen of the darkness and in the proliferation of symbolic details around the subject which is tied down to a fixed idea. Certainly, as Claude-Gilbert Dubois states, mannerism sees things through the screen of universal stylistics and, consequently, they do not appear to be presences but imagined elements that are inscribed in a code of representation. Whereas classical literature attempts to balance the central idea of a sentence with what could be interpreted as the lateral idea, whilst maintaining a hierarchy of semantic importance based on the central idea, mannerism is an attempt to alter this hierarchical balance by reinforcing marginality, constructing through derivation and seeking elements of surprise. In the work of C.F. there is a mannerism of expressions, references and colour, in which decorative and plain elements can be taken together or propose a radical dialogue of representation and abstraction. The artist's mannerism allows him to combine El Greco with Picasso or Warhol, "via Guatemala and India", in a clear manifestation of his syncretic spirit. The aesthetics of loss or of the elliptical route are particularly clear in the case of C.F., as he surrenders himself to the pleasure of details, which may produce uncertainty and, on occasion, give free reign to horror vacui. In his paintings there is an epic representation that introduces elements and images that serve to produce discontinuity. "La segunda cena o la cena de las Tantálidas" (The Second Supper or the Supper of the Tantalus) 1997-98 • 200 × 110 cm • Mixed media on wood "La aparición imprevista" (The Unforeseen Appearance) 2000-01 • 131.5 × 242.5cm • Mixed media on fabric C.F.'s paintings can be considered to be allegorical, which is both an attitude and a technique, both a perception and a procedure. The origin of allegories is commentary and exegesis, they are images that have been the subject of appropriation; the paradigm for allegorical works is the palimpsest or, in deconstructionist terms: the supplement. Certainly, allegory is coherently attracted to fragmentariness, imperfection and incompleteness. The quotes can then be contemplated in the same manner as the "romantic ruins". C.F.'s aesthetics can be understood as a "dramatisation of representation", an allegorical impulse derived from the evidence that the allegory is a riddle, a sophisticated composition of images. In conjunction with the allegorical strategy is ornamental determination, the vital experience of luxury. C.F.'s mythological landscapes include the apotheosis of corporality, a radical manifestation of pleasure. This entry into the place of desire is also a highly lucid meditation with regard to the relationship of the painter with his model or, in other words, with the flesh of the painting, in a direction that inevitably reminds us of the Picasso constellation. The desire to combine feeling and style within so-called interior miscegenation or mestizaje is complete freedom, a luxurious denuding of the painting. Carlos Franco develops a lyrical treatment of mythology, but also an experience of the vision that remains faithful to places (the view of the landscape from his house that he obsessively repeats) or to nude bodies (seated women between a version of a harem and the memory of Manet's Breakfast on the Grass). Let us consider this statement from the artist: "I represent things that I have felt and touched, but cannot be seen". A strange form of praise for tactility, for events that constitute us, but that can only appear as fragments, fantasies, turmoils of desire. This painter's images are full of sensuality, a music of curves and bright colours, in which the power of the mark and vigorous expression conduct a wonderful dialogue with the

structure of the drawing, of which C.F. is undoubtedly a master. Excessive meals, naked bodies surrendering to eroticism, representations of mortality, recollections of myths such as Marsyas skinned alive, fragments of the happy and sacrificial territory of the painting. Even on the edge of existence, with melancholy imposing its sombre law, the hand is reminiscent of the manner of art and it seeks a further reason to achieve pleasure, however brief it may be. This creator has achieved an extraordinary synthesis of imagination and abstraction in which the drawing allows him to maintain a type of narrative location. Miguel Cereceda stated that for C.F. the drawing is an expression "of a conscious sublimation, and this then converts it into a sort of moralist or philosopher that expresses his desires". If painting has been described as a mask and creative expression as a tattoo that arises from a prior magical period, then it is also true to say that his aesthetics tangentially reveal a state of the world, like when he alludes to mass murder in the splendid paintings entitled *Almuerzo campestre en Nagasaki* (Rural lunch in Nagasaki) (1999-2000): the sky is red and, when the lights are turned off, the fluorescent paint maintains a tragic scene, as if the memory had to cross absolute blindness. C.F. by doubly fixing his sights on the landscape horizon and on the proliferation of his imagination was able to maintain a lucid practice of painting, removed from the surrounding banality or the pathetic surrender to decorative tendencies. He has literarily described the experience of jumping down the stairs at school to reach the schoolyard, "playing with the earth's gravity". The journey of imagination sometimes forces us into a situation in which "our souls leave our bodies": fear and pleasure. Things -both mythical and contemporary- that art guards in a glacial time in which reality rushes pathetically into the show. Fernando Castro Flórez. See CV on page 11 "Presagio" (Portent) 1998 • 110 x 76 cm • Mixed media – cardboard