

VERY SKILLFULLY

Carlos Franco is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the best contemporary Spanish painters, blessed with an extremely fertile imagination, and above all, a skill in the visual arts that permits him to widen his techniques and themes of the idea of painting in order to realise his unfathomable course of obsessions.

Linked to the typical critical laziness, with the new Madrid figuration, it is true that this creator has taken a completely personal aesthetic journey in which he ranges from mythology to a fascination for Brazil, from the construction of an ideal landscape to something Dionysian, from gestural mannerism to the assumption of digital procedures for reproducing images. Carlos Franco's concern for uniting feeling and style in what he calls inner crossbreeding or miscegenation is, at the end of the day, complete creative freedom thanks to which we find ourselves before a luxurious undressing of painting.

Carlos Franco's paintings can be placed in relation to the allegorical, which is at the same time an attitude and a technique, a perception while being a procedure. The origin of the allegory is the comment and the exegesis, images that have been appropriated: it is this meta-textual aspect that is invoked when the allegory is attached as a merely added on interpretation post-facto of a piece of art, an ornament or a rhetorical ostentation. The paradigm for allegorical work is like that, the palimpsest or, in constructionist terms, the supplement.

It is true that the allegorical is coherently attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect or the incomplete, the quotes can thus be contemplated in the same way as the "Roman ruins". The aesthetics of Carlos Franco can be understood as a dramatisation of the performance, an allegorical boost that starts out with the evidence that the allegory is a riddle, a sophisticated composition of images.

Along with the allegorical strategy an ornamental determination is evident, the vital experience of luxury, drawing a line of resistance to minimal hegemony which, on many occasions reveals both the complete shortness of sight and even the absence of creative intensity. Carlos Franco proves that it is possible to conciliate Baroque excess, the overlapping of images, with visual forcefulness and above all with the ability to generate deep passions in the author while at the same time leaving him a wide space for hermeneutics in which his own plots and fables can be introduced.

In Carlos Franco's work an intense concern for the history of painting is apparent, which he embodies by moving away from the antiquarian determination or one that is purely monumental. And, of course, an artist that lucidly reconsiders Spain's cultural singularity has to tackle the subject of bullfighting where painters such as Goya or Picasso left a deep imprint, among others. When contemplating the ten pieces of art that comprise the Tauromía folder by Carlos Franco, that masterly blend of classicism and contemporaneity can be seen along with the canonical illustration and overwhelming chromatic aberration. There is extreme respect in the approach of his art to Cúchares and above all avoiding the "folkloric" viewpoint. It gives the impression that the artist is not in the tiers but in the arena, near the bullfighter as if he were another member of the troop dicing with death. And the skull appears as a premonition in the image of the "Picador" and the "Banderillero" lies like another dead piece with the bull, literally on top of it.

In spite of the enormous dramatising of these bullfighting scenes, a gently luck and acceptance of the depth of the ritual appear, as is true in Picasso's work. The master painter from Málaga, played off his visions of the bullring with the prehistoric fertility and with the fascination of the indigenous.... "Painter and engraver of Lascaux, of Altamira, said Rene Char about Picasso, - of all the places where bulls were present". In 1933 Picasso illustrated the surrealist magazine *Minotaur*, facing that hybrid beast of humanity with enormous artistic licence. His *Minotaur* is obviously outside the labyrinth,

removed from the literality of the myth, taking part in Bacchanalian frivolity. Picasso's Minotaur combines the sadness and tenderness of the inevitable drama that is inherent to the mortal rite of the bull run and the classical mythology. Picasso undoubtedly feels identified in that animal, beaten by feminine shrewdness: in the Minotaur he expresses his concern for metamorphic life. Carlos Franco, on the other hand, does not make a subjective projection about the fierce inhabitant of the clever Daedalic construction, but rather, as stated earlier, places his sight on the secondary area or, expressed in bullfighting terms, drawing the bull away, knowing that the passes and the ornaments of the master can lead to a fatal end. Carlos Franco likes taking risks, and it is obvious that by making bullfighting his subject, he is not afraid of the dogmatism of the fine and upright nor the verbosity of the critics. He admires the fluency of the exceptional timing in bullfighting, a categorical democracy imposed there and, of course, the radical appearance of the sacrificial.

As a painter he enjoys the serious choreography of the bullfighters and, at the same time, the hope that the crown hold on to which, in his engravings, is a luck of "pointillism". That that is magic, unpredictable and mortal are interwoven in bullfighting. But fantasy and anxiety also come out here. At the time of the final thrust of the sword, Carlos Franco compares the face of the Matador and that of another which are barely the same in an unknown dimension. The bull is framed in a two-handed pass and, by humiliating it; it appears to discover a field of colour where the image is contained in optical aberration.

This wonderful Tauromía subtly suggests an interpretation of bullfighting as a space to recognise oneself, and at the same time one of ceremonial fraternity with the others, while all the colours are exalted and moving us away from imperialistic banality and literally mortal events which remind us that we are, as the Greeks knew only too well, the ephemeral ones. A woman finally kills the bull with the dagger. A just conclusion of a cycle of desire, a bullfighting gesture in which Carlos Franco proves that he knows the terrain he treads.