

RECORDS OF THE BODY

(text by Eugenia Brito, poet, linguist, theoretician, professor and Chilean critic)

Guillermo del Valle's work is a record of the biographical and human footprint on different canvases, which span across a series of exhibitions displayed in different parts of the world. These series have been "Encuentros" (Encounters), acrylic on canvas, revealing snapshots of everyday human beings. They are fleeting displays of human habitation and of sharing a social space from the house to the garden, and from there to a marine setting and to others. The interesting thing about this series, such as in "Huellas" (Traces) (2012-2013), is the formation of a story that operates by besieging the places where the passage of human life takes place. The slight pace through which he writes its story in successive archeological layers in which the mark and its biology separate fragile but inexorably the human being from other beings. The mark as part of living matter is its most precise trace of life; the history of man consists of marking places, with blood, with sweat, with semen if a man, or with menstrual blood if born a woman.

It is this marking of things, his eloquence in marks, wrinkles and folds that highlight the milestones that constitute Guillermo de Valle's entry in the field of art. Subtle, mysterious, he gazes that sharp/keen eye which sees/looks and retains a memory, of that which existed, cohabited, had sex, and then was relegated to oblivion in those secret confines that we sometimes visit in our dreams in distress, in sadness, searching for its message and its belonging, like those bodies with which oneself coexists, that have been remnants of life in which we nest or insert the being. They are, then, rooms in which the being passes. In a way, thresholds.

Since the sheets are where man spends most of his life. He sleeps there, makes love, and sometimes dies on them.

The pillow is the other small space in which we observe folds, marks, secretions, and in general everything that transpires with the human body when it inhabits a private place. "Huellas" (Traces) is the space that records the human being which will begin in "Encuentros" (Encounters) and that continues with this series "Records of the body", acrylic on canvas and sculpture/painting, mixed *media*.

THE RECORDS OF THE BODY SERIES.

Although in the first works, there is an absence of the human being, in this last collection we do have human figures, particularly that of a young woman, with reddish hair, fair skinned. A creature from European culture painted in acrylic on canvas that obsessively shows different scenes, in a style that oscillates between the surrealist glare, the symbolist and pop. There is also the young woman's counterpart, a mature woman, who gives life to the painting

“Monja” (Nun), this woman is large and soft like hunting prey, underwear painted red. As a gesture of control, as a secret, as theft, perhaps, the nun’s gesture is ambiguous and at times contradictory.

The landscape of these paintings is configured in an area situated between the real and unreal, sleep and delirium, with the awareness that there are symbolic driving forces in the human psyche, forces that push us to create imaginary worlds, myths, dreams, desires that often connect with the mystery of sexuality and death, with birth and the fragility of human life. It’s also in the case of this painting; it accounts for the many incarnations of human history, as a sort of excavation of the senses that are found within sacrifice, violence and death.

It could be said that we are seeing the proliferation of reprints of the sacred and profane in different volumes and positions inserted in mythical and religious figures, like the powerful birds, that like the crow, the dove, the seagull, the rabbit, transverse the lines of this painting. As a reminder of the ancient pagan gods of polytheistic religions, which made men believe they were deities who guarded the supernatural by linking it with living nature. Those gods summoned centers of significance that are present in Guillermo del Valle’s erotic setting to recall death.

Because this entire map of senses points to a sacrifice, a woman’s sacrifice, a young woman; her initiation to sex appears as violence; blood is spilled, sometimes profusely, as bodily overflow, in others as a faint thread. This spill requires immediate cleaning, as seen in the pail where the water turns red. The state of nature, the way plants twist their leaves, in a certain animism and the way in which objects from the simplest, the hooks with which clothes are hung, the large pail with female underwear, indicate the restlessness of the space where the sensitive plot of this painting takes place. In the desperate search to wash that blood, exposed there, intertwined with the fabric and water. The phallic cacti bind with fetish underwear, displaying the evidence of the crime, pointing to male sex that is happy, proud and satisfied.

The exhibition of these paintings fluctuates between the private and public, between the secret and the display of what happens with sexuality, of what is sacred and profane in the sexual rite, in its prelude, in its final scene, and above all in the place of violence that is nested in the human being, in the complex relationship of eros and death, in the hidden tanatos at the beginning and end of all life.

Michel Foucault has pointed out that power passes over bodies through complex biopolitical networks that take their place through education and sexuality. Culture interposes by insistently articulating its plot regarding man and in making him sensitive and vulnerable to its ways of organization, constituting a coercive system that imposes its strength and significant direction through discourse, aimed towards the organizations of social life: family, religion, politics.

All of them in tight stockings become accomplices in providing an institutional format to individuals in order to turn them into a complex technology of power, into productive machines of consumer goods, to serve the dominant powers, defined according to an area of predominance of the hegemonies.

Guillermo de Valle's painting is situated in the background of this mechanism of dominance, in an archaic place and often obliterated by the production systems and the mass media. At the heart of genitality and in its most vulnerable center: women.

Women are the great other of the system, situated at the back of the speculum that underlies the Eurocentric culture and the chain of symbols that, scattered in the different systems of the distribution of goods, uses her as a symbol of exchange between powers and many times, sacrifices her. Every sacrifice is formulated over a body appreciated by a community, often valued as "beautiful" and, certainly, young, a body that becomes an engine of group desire.

In the case of Guillermo de Valle's paintings, human sexuality is the great theme of this series, the significant engine of all these scenes, from which the male figure is avoided, only insinuated, and repressed in some scenes. In order to focus on the feminine, on women's sexuality.

This sexuality that betrays itself as bleeding flesh that frightens the painter, to the extent that it escapes from the orderly cleansing of the morality of Christian culture, that morality of white cloths, of ordained bodies, pure, without passage, they are disturbed by the threads of menstrual blood, blood that flows from losing the hymen – the veil that is lifted from male penetration. The woman, then, is the bearer of the first mark of the species.

The first scene of this work is a setting in which the human body is insinuated; behind the white sheets and the orange bedspread, it stands out, the violet underwear, a synecdoche of female sex; the sensuality of the colors reveals the precedence of sex living among the clothes; the violet color of some panties flung far from the bed, representing the story of bodies that found each other, in the already mature lines of the flesh. But the painting is titled "Amanecer" (Sunrise), arrival of the day after the sexual upheaval, the excess of body. There is thus a feeling of heaviness in Guillermo del Valle's work, and that body that weighs oscillates between the indulgences of experience and the sensation of revealing a paradoxical secret for all human beings, and that is related with the ambiguities of pleasure, its proximity to what's religious, in other times, to the mystical. And that it's a feared proximity because its infinite, that's why it's mystical.

And that indicates the horror of the sacred, the ominous. Open flesh attracts and terrifies, like every abyss, the great nun of the painting, of the same name, smiles hysterically. Is it castrated femininity, is it a male dressed in religious clothes who enjoys looking at a young woman's lingerie?

Hidden senses, the strength of this rite of passage from one place to another, is made explicit in "Muerte" (Death), in which the dove appears dead and with panties over a pool of blood. The dove is central as a sign of purity, of the virginal, incarnation of the scared, symbol of

peace, it joins connotated senses through feminine representations in oral culture, in which, at least in Chile, a young girl is called a “paloma” (dove). Guillermo del Valle’s work shows the miscegenation of concepts and languages that converge in his painting, as in the sayings of oral culture: “la palomita” (the little dove), “mi palomita” (my little dove), in which Europe’s high culture is connected with Chilean oral and popular culture.

And the dove lies dead, the little dove of love songs and the symbol of sweetness, of the feminine in her youth, wrapped in just white panties. It’s always, then, blood and its indulgence.

The great figures exhibited in these works: the young women whose intimate clothes fill the earth, populate the dense fields, blow in the wind, or hang or pile up in a sort of progressive accumulation, covering the entire scene, they are the “others” of a woman, her double: the rabbit, a metaphor of female sex, the symbolic dove and the squeaky seagulls, safeguard that threshold in which feminine corporality shares its locus with the primal. To highlight what Agamben would say, the woman as the “homo sacer” of history, that being who can be killed (the death of women is still a routine occurrence) with impunity.

Because of that, the red tone and blood, genital blood is so abundant, covering the paintings with its obscene and sudden way of appearing, showing the body between landscapes, the desert, the beach, the house, the bedroom. Really flooding everything.

But the eye wants to clean what happened, we must wash our clothes again, we have to repeat that operation to satiety. As in “Desierto” (Desert) 1, in “Verano” (Summer), it’s left as a testimony of a finite story, a final and allegorical word of the body, a panty over the green field.

Eugenia Brito

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