Agustí Puig – dues de blanc i una de negra

Agustí Puig: Friend…

… his painting takes us back to the old days

When there were no divisions between

Art and life, aesthetics and philosophy.

Frances Miralles[1]

These concluding words of a text on Agustí Puig mark the commencement of a project which was to be in gestations for nine years until its consolidation. Agustí’s painting and its exhibitions at the inaugurations of this new gallery in Barcelona is, for me, a very special nexus of the fins blend of interests I have always had in his work – the assertion that he is a “favorite” is not unfounded since he has been a constant in the foundation’s collection – and a fine friendship has grown up thanks to continual contact and visits to his studio. This is not the whole story, there is more: I have always inaugurated with him – it has become a tradition of such importance that I believe it brings us luck!

This is why we can see that the inaugural exhibition in the VolART 2 gallery is a special proposition which should be regarded as a departure from the usual criteria and direction of the exhibition space. The fact is, it is a celebration of, and homage to, loyalty, both his and mine, in which I would like to share my most personal experience as collector: that sense of art being incorporated into everything connected with my own experience.

For me, this involvement with Agustí Puig comes from a need and desire to return to painting as a discipline, just at time when boundaries are blurring. His work is a head-to-head debate with painting, with a concern for the human being from a sensual and naturalistic point of view, for the spontaneity of gesture which disarticulates and fragments human impulses, for the calligraphy and symbols which are interpreted in a personal way, profiting as much from colour as form. These latent impulses have always appeared to me not as excesses, but more as a need to release the pressures found in the depths of the soul. His natural handing of painting and print making, the command of technique, but above all the outpouring of poetry that is to be found in the most everyday and apparently irrelevant subjects, His figures and objects, sketched with rapid strokes, become a kind of personal diary which demonstrates that mystery, attraction and all that seduces arise from acts of the profoundest simplicity.

Whenever I speak about the Foundation, its collection and various activities, I always allude to walking, because I maintain that every project is made cohesive by advancing, creating milestones and retracing your steps when necessary. As in the creative process of an artist, we advance when we attain that state created by the meeting of the mind and physical action. Maybe this is why, Antonio Colinas said when referring to “our much-loved painter”, I have always been attracted to the head and legs of his human simplifications, “Head and legs now play the biggest part in thinking and walking, feeling and moving. …this prominence of head and legs leads the painter to the extraordinary discovery that a human being is only a head with legs; a walking thought.”

After the 100 Prints of Rome which we presented at the VolART 1 gallery, after the permanent and temporary exhibitions which were part of the trajectory of the Palau Solterra until last year when it became The Gallery of Contemporary Photography (the first of its kind in the whole of Spain), we are once again offering “open
house” to Agustí Puig and an exhibition of previously un-shown, large-format works in this new gallery on Ausiàs Marc Street. We will also meet him later in the Vila Casas Foundation’s painting collection housed in the new gallery at Can Framis.

It only remains for me excite your curiosity and invite you to view the art of “our painter”, to enter the province of a new discovery where gallery and work –whose paths cross in the austerity of shadows- project the flickering of a light which takes us back to the beginnings of visual writing.

Antoni Vila Casas


Sense títol
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas

Energía, fuerza, vigor y cuerpos sin limitaciones. Así se nos presenta este artista de Sabadell nacido en 1957. Perteneciente a la transvanguardia y en constante evolución, apreciamos en Puig un caos creativo en el que contempla la simplicidad del trazo como medio de expresión así como el impulso y la fuerza en su forma de aplicar la pintura. Su pasado artístico influido por el arte conceptual le ha permitido avanzar en su búsqueda de la idea primigenia y de eliminar todo aquel contenido innecesario.
The head thinks and feet walk. Agustí Puig needs nothing else to represent his homenets (little men), as he affectionately calls them. Miró said, “In order to jump up into the air, the first and essential thing is to have your feet planted firmly on the ground.” Everything else is unnecessary and so the artist goes back to stripping away, eliminating all that is superfluous, representing this ideal in his figures. Sometimes he finds inspiration in the ideal, sometimes it is a completion of what occurs over time and the deep reflection by which it is characterised. His homenets are emblematic of his work and he uses them and chance to create pieces freighted with mystery.

Agustí Puig’s large-format works make a great impression on us; they surround us and trigger deep reflection. He uses a variety of supports; from wood to paper and canvas. But in each one there is a constant: controlled chaos. As he says, “Things arise from chaos that you would never find by working in an ordered manner.” Ascending Bodies is born from this chaos, and in it we may observe a certain point of mysticism. Do these two heads represent the elevation of the human being to a higher state of consciousness? Is this a painting about death? For Puig, death represents the beginning of everything. Death is the sine qua non for the existence of life. The black background as a void with the human heads levitating, floating almost like medusas, rising to the surface from the oceanic depths, contemplative beings forcefully marked on the canvas and made up of a clutch of lines; every detail of this piece plunges us into Puig’s own dark and chaotic undersea world.
In his constant search for answers to the mystery of art, Puig prefers to pose the right questions before looking for answers. It is plain in his work that the obvious does not interest him. He prefers to subtly insinuate rather than show. He uses a stripped-down calligraphic iconography which he has perfected in the course of his career - in his drawings and paintings as well as his prints and graphic work. The Lost Painter shows the painter himself in a state of distress by means of an incisive and frenetic line more commonly found in drypoint than painting.

Puig’s work shows universal characters. Far from representing only the artist’s reality, he has simplified his figures and strokes so that he can depict bodies without limitations; postures and realities that are common to all of us. Viewers enter into the interplay of interpretation and can see themselves reflected in realities that we can all identify with. In this particular piece we can see our common connection and how we are joined by the fact of being human beings.
The artist's work is often characterised by the use of a specific palette. His most commonly used colours are white, black, and a range of browns and ochres. With them his work approaches primitivism, with his virtually calligraphic strokes and simple and iconographic forms. The viewer is transported to a sacred place half-way between the idea and its realisation.

The artist depicts this piece showing a child embracing its mother with forcefulness and simplicity. Restlessly, intuitively and somewhat savagely, Puig energetically traces in the air before his material makes contact with the support. His impatience is counterbalanced by years of searching and simplifying his symbols, producing a clear and forceful final result. The cracking of the white paint on the black background gives the scene a sense of immediacy and atemporality, two core concepts in his output.
If there is a recurring figure in Puig’s work, it is that of the “walker”. It is a motif we can see as an archetypal human figure. The figure, in movement and made up of only feet and a head, recurs almost obsessively in many of Puig’s pieces. It is an eternal traveller, made up of only feet and a head. The context of the figure changes depending on the painting but is unchangeable in itself, eternal, constantly in transit.

Some of the recurring symbols in Puig’s output include: distance, heads, feet, chairs… Energetic and potent strokes fuse and give rise to such universal and essential concepts as: the passing of time, childhood, youth, life and death. His world appears to us in motion and endowed with a dramatic dimension. In Theatre Entrance the artist seems to be inviting us to enter, via the spillage of semiliquid material, his explosive and similarly liquid thoughts.
Puig probes and investigates his expressionist techniques, while exploring himself and his canvas with the same sense of drive. We can sense his vigorous, free, vehement and eager spirit. He himself is part of the force of his works. Written on the Wall makes us think of a self-portrait where the artist has felt the need to leave a deep impression. As if fear of the passing of time has impelled him to leave his mark; a mark made in anguish and depicting his very existence, which is in itself at times distressful. His honed calligraphic style breaks free and creates a duality between empty and full, relief and concaveness, black and white, chaos and order. His work is conflicting, opposing, mysterious and frenetic.
Sense títol
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas

Home aspirat
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas

Home
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas
L'home petit
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas

L'home petit rera la cortina
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas
Les imatges de la lectura
2008
Painting
Mixed media on canvas