

Drawing is not painting

Eduard Arranz-Bravo always says that he was a child with a pencil in his hands, that even at an early age he was passionate about drawing and that, for him, drawing was second nature.

He also explains that, despite the suffocating, hyper-academic environment at art school, he was an industrious student, because it was there he learned that you have to work hard to produce something which you will then destroy. The really important point of view is not from outside; rather, it is our inner gaze. **We live a dual reality; there is that which surrounds us and our own personal vision, which is equally important.** Even dreams, which create a parallel reality, are linked to the reality of what we have experienced, our own reality. Accordingly, creativity is the result of what one is, what one sees and imagines.

Arranz-Bravo draws his vision of things with a light, free hand, driven by a powerful curiosity about everything around him. He is an obsessive worker, because he conserves intact his enthusiasm for things, as if he were doing them for the first time. Arranz-Bravo's drawings are imbued with a magical element thanks, not only to his creative intuition, but also to his mastery of his art.

The exhibition Arranz-Bravo. El dibuix en acció [Arranz-Bravo. Drawing in Action] illustrates fifty years of drawing in black and white, because the artist believes, like Ingres, Leonardo da Vinci, Holbein and so on, that the purity of drawing is to be found in black and white. Represented here are fifty years in the faithful career of a draftsman who does not copy what he sees, but draws in accordance with his personality. **Arranz-Bravo does not make sketches, he does not use drawing to develop a painting; rather, his work as a draftsman should be judged at the same level as his paintings or his sculptures.**

His drawing is pure pencil stroke, a fine stroke that emerges from the white of the paper, filling it with people, figures and portraits, with twisting bodies, hands, eyes and expressions. **For Arranz-Bravo, the gaze is the key to a person and, as if by chance almost, his portraits express the psychology of the subject.** For example, the Zahara series, produced in 1983, when he and the photographer Xavier Guardans spent a week in Zahara de la Sierra, a small Andalusian village in the province of Cadiz. Guardans took photographs and Arranz-Bravo drew those people, their faces furrowed by life. Two techniques to capture a glimpse of a single reality, first seen in a joint exhibition at the Eude Gallery in Barcelona.

And if the gaze is a recurrent theme in his work then so, too, are hands. **What would an artist be without hands? To create, it is necessary to work with one's hands and that is perhaps why hands are inextricably linked to humanity's first artistic expressions: the prehistoric paintings in the Cave of Altamira.** What moved those people to leave the imprint of their hands on the wall of a cave? Why is this an image that is repeated in other caves? What were those people like, what did they think? Even today, this is a mystery that reaches us as something magical. For the hands of the artist intent on making the pencil dance over paper, that, too, is magical.

This journey through fifty years of drawing ends with Roots, a recent series. Roots nourish, anchor to the earth, and enable growth, flowering, in short, life. It is as if that boy who felt the passion for drawing at a very young age now blossomed once more in all his strength and power, great and magnificent. Large works that, paradoxically, look like paintings, are still drawings, the aforementioned light stroke becoming gesture and alluding to the global concept of art. These pieces represent a new horizon, one whose breadth and mystery suggests new readings and approaches. Because everything starts with a drawing. The drawing is concept, approach, like the skeleton of any work that is subsequently developed and enriched.

In 1968, when he was just 27 years old, Eduard Arranz-Bravo received the prestigious Ynglada Guillot Prize for Drawing. That was a year of plenitude, of consolidation and of new horizons opened up by the events of May 68 in Paris. Plenty of water has gone under the bridge since, but, even today, Arranz-Bravo continues to struggle against all the odds in support of a universal work.

Because drawing is not painting. It is revolutionary.

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