

Erasing Borders Brings Us the Essential / Ángel Calvo Ulloa

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Diego Pujal's paintings are slippery. They uphold concrete instants, positions registered in the retina that are reproduced on each of his canvases and that, even on them, risk disappearance. Diego Pujal's paintings are not frozen instants, they are rather the fleeting possibility or chance to grasp, in a weightless medium, a form, not more outstanding than others, but a figure that gathers the information of those that precede and follow it in a manner similar to them. We could relate that uphold gesture to a last breath, to that empty sensation we get when that final vaporous cloud seeps between our lips. Pujal confronts that exact instance, the one that comes before that dissolve, and helps us predict it.

Nothing is so foretelling as the stopping of a process, at times, perhaps, similar to the paintings of Carlos Alcolea, who works the fluidity of his shapes until a close relationship with death becomes evident. Figures are shown as if deformed by an unavoidable drive, detaching themselves from the canvas to moisten the eyes of the viewer. I remember the talks I had with an artist that often visited his mother ill with Alzheimer's, who, at that time, uttered her last unintelligible words. Concerned with the inevitable ending of those utterances, he rushed the frequency of the visits. That was probably evidence of the final end of childhood, which stopped with the disappearance of the voice that had nursed it. The utterances of the mother were like an unshaped stuttering that spilt from her mouth. Perhaps, words are only that, that split second from which sounds detach, holding the shape that the mouth gave them. In *A palabra ofrécese á boca* [Words Offer Themselves to the Mouth]¹, the poet Francisco Cortegoso says that that giving implies the acceptance of a gradual loss of gestures, of those definitions that helped shape each word and that now, as in childhood, does not become just words but sounds of dubious meaning; they become onomatopoeias, from the pronunciation of which only gestures are left, that ultimate end that painting seeks.

We return to Alcolea, who, in *Aprender a nadar* [Learning How to Swim], changes also his concept *body/canvas* into an onomatopoeia when he writes: "*Cue/Cua or Cua/Cue*", as uttered by a throat in reverse, vocal cords-cilia, cilium thread, thread attached to the pharynx/larynx wall. Ironed disyllabic duck in dampness.² Alcolea's onomatopoeias sound like drippings and hidden anatomies, the research site of an internist perhaps. I do not link Diego Pujal with Alcolea's intent to show a stark view of his relation to painting however. Painting could also avoid pain without avoiding honesty. Exposed or not to disease, the spaces in which the body shapes these bad copies include unknowns, however, that sometimes, as in the case of the oral cavity or the interior of a clasped hand, are more surprising—if that is possible—than the close relationship we build with the enigmas they hide. Those enigmas materialize themselves in those fleeting forms that Diego Pujal obsessively resets to the end, safeguarding them from showing such a clear-cut profile that will break that diffused and fluid transition. It is, perhaps, a much more transcendent intent to be stated than what Jean Arp mentioned, that "*erasing borders brings us the essential*".

Here, painting is a means and an end. It is a means in its commitment to facilitate the representation of these forms that are so slippery, that are always at risk of disappearing and

allow their capture, as if the painter had stolen from time something very valuable. That end exists because it is, perhaps, the only way to certify that those forms were there previously, beyond the realm of painting. However, it would be a superficial analysis to endow this work with a distinctive property linked solely to that attempt to stop vagueness. We should take a close look more in line, as Mallarmé proposed, with defining a painting that *“does not depicts the thing but the effect that it produces”*

Diego Pujal's work is an encrypted message that certifies a special subtle manner of handling an old, as well as current, type of painting. The way his different series are confronted establish almost anecdotal borders that do not cater to current logic nor do they seek to establish considerable formal differences. The titles do not provide crucial clues either. The goal is not to make it all easily understood nor encrypt it to the limit. There is something that definitely escapes us, and something that seems very familiar. To be half way between several points helps us position ourselves, for better or worse, in a space of observation that gives us the freedom to do whatever we want.

1 CORTEGOSO, Francisco, Suicidas, Chan da Pólvora, Santiago de Compostela, 2016.

2 ALCOLEA, Carlos, Aprender a nadar, Libros de la Aventura, Madrid, 1980.