

Open End

As soon as you enter what was once a pawnshop, you come across two ambiguous, enigmatic, metaphoric elements: one structure that seems the forecastle of a canoe or the extremity of a horn, but it is inserted into the architecture and, therefore, seems elliptical and amputated. It is menacing yet remote, looming yet held back. And there, nearby, is a disturbing sculpture created by putting together a sheet-steel swing and a tool for mounting livestock: in other words, there is once again a form that alludes to the theme of hovering (between pleasure and pain, expectation and meeting).

So we can understand just why Leonardo Blanco wanted to call his show *Open End*, in other words, an infinite opening. To do so he had to make use of that weird, baroque rhetorical trope known as an oxymoron, a genuine sign of toleration for opposites or, rather, for their cohabitation as though in a crucible for alchemical fusion. His pictures thus reveal themselves as wedded to their own internal rules, rules which have nothing to do with any kind of linguistic coherence. They are not desolately Informal, nor are they elegantly geometric nor even arrogantly evocative. On the contrary, they seem to push the image almost to conspire against itself, to disobey any kind of knowledge, and to continue to pose in new styles. It is as though the artist, instead of aiming at being always and manically identical to himself, were in search of being in a state of continual change, like a harlequin who always hides himself behind a different mask.

His "art kit" includes wooden drums, sheets of used aluminium, old instruments, digital prints, acrylics, inks, resins. Equipment we might well find in abundance as much in a magician's den as in an architect's studio. What interests Blanco is the conquest of an image peopled by shadows, by things not yet born (or already ended), by semblances – and yet also by organisation, by imparting balance to these rays of eternity (even if we are always dealing with an eternity that lasts just a moment). This is invariably a question of the conjunction of order and disorder, harmony and chaos. As the artist himself has openly declared, "My aim is to work on boundaries, on landscapes". In other words, on that precarious area where nothing is confined, sharp, precise. If we look at any one of his works what we apparently see is a nervous, uncontrolled, unstoppable kind of gestural act: a colour, laid on with fast, energetic brushstrokes, even at times furiously thrown on with his hands. This is almost action painting in which the last remnants of form disappear and the artist himself becomes what he is creating. Except that Blanco's aim is not to eliminate the boundaries between art and life, between mark and body, but to investigate the very experience undergone by the marks, their adventitious, precarious movement, one without any particular aim (or even any real aim which, deep down, is the same thing). And so he metaphorically turns back and wipes out, denies, and veils his footsteps (or, on the contrary, he adds further materials, almost as though to reveal all the inconveniences that might crop up along the "path of creation"). And so, when it come down to it, what we really experience is the "place of our soul", fragments of darkness, the reading of an unknown alphabet where the signs assume their own being instead of being the signs of something else.

We might well say the same about the works based on digital prints. All these photos show the same ghostly, unfocused entities, similar to certain "bleached" Surrealist effects where, more than the reproduction of the thing, what counts is the illusion of the thing itself or even of its absence. For Blanco, too, what is important is to account for a loss or further visual possibilities. Which does not mean dealing with such themes as automatism or the subconscious but, rather, with investigating the image and what lies behind its essence and to undertake, through the use of materials, thoughts about the intimate processes of the act of making.

And, finally, when Blanco envelops his pictures in industrial resins it seems to be an act of preservation, of protection: almost the salvation of the creative act. Except that resins too are materials that impress their own imposing physicality. And they impress it above all on these dry, cool works which give the impression of segregating the various images. And so, once again, we find ourselves in front of ambivalence: a defence and an imprisonment, protection and reclusion. But then, are these cloistered geometries really as restrictive as prison bars, or, instead, is the whole of space an inexorable development where perception slides into anomaly, surface into the background, and “openness into closure”?

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