

Act of faith in "Déus"

The "Déus" series by Ferran Garcia Sevilla, exhibited for several days in the Ciento Gallery, have sparked off a controversy. Not dissimilar, however, to that aroused by his recent pictorial epoch or much earlier, conceptual work. In truth, the work of this artist often contains elements of unease, tension, convulsion, easily provoking aggression in onlookers normally tending towards a more mannerly style, or at least good, traditional painting.

Other aspects of Garcia Sevilla may also disturb: his obstinate need for prolific production, a temptation which often means that his essential message is confined within our frontiers and fails to dominate new art trends further afield; a separatist style of discourse; a rejection of balanced composition, lineal development and the classic repertory of the masters of modernity; his current discounting of earlier ideas and projects despite his stance of conceptual rebel; the very fact that it gives him such pleasure to approach from entirely the wrong direction....

One cannot deny the contradictions inherent in the intentional fury and violence of these black paintings, executed as for an exorcism, in his repetitive and systematic style, implying an immense productivity and the pressure of time, in his struggle to maintain a primitive, savage spirit by creating these crude, rudimentary "Déus" whilst obligatorily opposing a whole series of cultural baggage and conventions, in the danger of satiety or the narcissism of looking-glass art; without denying these contradictions, or possibly precisely because of them, we concede to an act of faith in the "Déus" of Ferran Garcia Sevilla. This may also occur because the spirit of contradiction lies at a much deeper level, shattering any expectations naively aroused by his exhibition in the Maeght Gallery and the works forming part of the *Homenatge a Picasso* by Catalan artists, the exhibition of modern art in the Balearic Islands and *Otras figuraciones*, in the sense of believing that this artist had finally moved towards synthesis, purification and elegance.

In recent times, a certain prejudice has often existed towards pictorial art depicting the world of fables or historic acts, with overly literal personages and scenarios, a prejudice often overturned when the works are expertly

painted and offer a strong dialectic content. This same process, although in reverse, is inspired by the work of Garcia Sevilla. Whether his painting is good or bad is of lesser importance.

Rosa Queralt

(This text was published in the newspaper "Avui" on the 14th February, 1982, as a result of the exhibition "Déus" in the Ciento Gallery in Barcelona).

ACT OF FAITH IN "DÉUS" (some years later)

"I would have liked to gain an inner peace with the passing of the years; this is one of my aims in life. But as you can see, I am still trying to escape".

Ferran Garcia Sevilla

Ferran Garcia Sevilla created the "Déus" series of paintings in 1981 for exhibition initially in the Barcelona Ciento Gallery (12th - 23rd January, 1982) and subsequently in the 4 Gats Gallery in Palma de Mallorca (5th - 27th March, 1982), this time under the generic title of "Illes a ca meva".

The series comprises 60 acrylic paintings in the same format (116 x 89 cm), one painting in a format of 250 x 195 cm and a gouache on paper of 77 x 57 cm. The 4 Gats Gallery published a catalogue-magazine for the exhibition which fully reproduced the works, whilst certain special copies included a small drawing. As can be seen from the list of titles included in the catalogue, the artist offers an evocative combination of different languages, ranging through Castilian, Catalan, French, English, German, Latin, Italian and finally Arabic, in an attempt to evoke the experience of a recently discovered Morocco and, in particular, the Sahara desert.

Both in the "Déus" series and in paintings prior to 1980-81, exhibited in the Maeght Gallery in Barcelona under the title "El viatge més absurd", Garcia Sevilla begins to reveal an interest in other cultural worlds such as North Africa or India, disclosing, in a plastic sense, a forceful primitivism and a neo-expressionist inspiration. Garcia Sevilla is therefore positioned as one of the driving forces behind the revival of painting, and in particular, the introduction of neo-figurative art at the turn of the decade, not only within Spanish art but within Europe in general, with the simultaneous appearance of the Trans-avant-garde in Italy, the Neo-expressionists in Germany and the primitive painters of Austria.

Fourteen years after the presentation of "Déus" in the Ciento Gallery, these violent, black paintings have lingered in the memory of many as an act of bravery by Garcia Sevilla, at a point when - as noted in the text

written by Rosa Queralt at the time -the mere suggestion of figurative art was viewed with a certain reticence. Despite the fact that these paintings have been "hibernating" throughout all these years in his workshop in Carrer Gènova, the works of the "Déus" series are the key to understanding the subsequent development of Garcia Sevilla, to ponder on the viewpoint of an artist who has become an obligatory reference point for the youngest amongst us and finally, to comprehend the controversy inspired by the world of painting at the beginning of the eighties.

Glòria Picazo

Ferran Garcia Sevilla was born in Palma de Mallorca in 1949. Having moved to Barcelona, he began a course in history and made his first approaches to the world of art within a group of conceptual artists. In 1977, with the exhibition *Muermos* in the now defunct Gallery G in Barcelona, Garcia Sevilla abandoned performance art and installations to dedicate himself fully to painting. In the following year he obtained 2nd prize in the Barcelona Contemporary Painting Biennial with a work which showed the influence of the French movement *Support-Surface*. At the beginning of the 80s, he adopted a primitivist style which laid the foundations for his later work. In 1981 he began teaching painting in the Fine Art Faculty of Barcelona, inspiring his students with his charismatic style and developing into one of the most significant painters of the time, both within the Catalan and Spanish art worlds.

His art covers an immense range of pictorial works, often grouped together in series, and bearing witness to his particular interest in oriental cultures. Music has proved to be an ideal accompaniment to his paintings.