A house in the mist

Wood at nightfall, wood at nightfall,
comfort your children, look after your children.
M. A. Bernat

Acrylic on paper, oil, inks. Broken glass windows, cracked by ice. And the white lines of the torn paper, the borders of the cement that joins the pieces of rubble. The marmoreal and its streaks, bits of life, the message made of fragments. To give mystery back to the world, the murmur of a breeze that turns the walls bearable, we become ragmen of time, weaving and unweaving its minutes. We build little by little another fabric out of the day, returning an erotic innocence to things, the unique infinity of dying things.

Day's dumb, silent variations of brown, grey, white. We shall never be able to abandon the idiocy of an ordinary life, that innermost silence of an existente that cannot speak of itself, since its irremediable infancy forces it to fulfill itself as work, without words. Because the enigma of individuation always precedes us, each human being must be an artist to realize his life. The work of Isabel Carnicer does not detach itself from this imperative, the one of an art being the instrument of survival. It is not that the biographical appears somehow in the work, but that the latter travels along regions we soon know they have been *experienced*. With these surfaces pulsating between the tied leaf and the imprecise atmosphere, Carnicer lends us an imminence that will never cease to approach, an ambiguity that will never precipitate itself or stop promising, menacing. *Never for ever*. There is not a single guaranteed achievement in the face of time's scum. We talk, as is to be expected, about a faculty that survives after any action obliging us to live in expectation. After swallowing tragedy, this can be good news, as it promises the possibility that inhabits every situation, always molded by more or less infamous circumstances. Anyhow, Carnicer paints, therefore she opens a window to fate which is our frequent starting point.

Perhaps due to this honesty, true to a sudden intuition about things, Carnicer's work presents itself monochromatic and in layers, like the day palpitating outside. Are you sure life is not "black and white"? Let us remember: he loves me, he loves me not? Is this good or bad? All shades of red or yellow fit into the inaudible vibration of a single colour, even if it is black. Chromatism is misleading, at least in that usual explosion of communicative polychromy, with its scheme of forced happiness. At the end of every phase, at the end of the year –we are always at the end, for time finishes off in every instant of calm and tiredness– there are just two or three questions, two or three experiences, two or three people left. The rest is information, that is to say, noise. So, it is understandable that, at crucial times, we tend to speak using few words, through just one channel. A man is known by the way he pauses. Perception and its wisdom mistrust channel-hopping. When painting, Isabel Carnicer pauses, she poses questions and persists in the "then and there" of the place where we are in, knowing that there lies a blessing too in the curse of "That is all there is". As if good were not something else than the listened to, understood, accepted evil. Learn how to die, dear diary. The rest will come in addition.

Our painter gives this lesson horizontally, laid down, like strips of light in their two critical moments, dawn and sunset. Carnicer turns uncertainty into floor tiles, a paving to be crossed. What is the horizon? A line that does not exist, one that cannot be reached but can be used as a reference to walk along. That is the question, to keep walking. In fact, we do not trust a truth that has not been *walked along*, put to the test of transit. Living is not indispensable, but walking is. The very loneliness, the indecision are the intersection all roads depart from. There is nothing inherited or irremediable –less than anything, death– that is not, at the same time, a task, a crossroad all ways depart from. Some natives even see paths in the desert or on the snow, where we only see nothing but dust.

Nomadism must never cease. Endless walking even is the condition to know how to stop at crucial times. On the edge of a vertigo where all questions remain in the air, with art we build a dwelling made of the elements. Helplessness as raw material: does not this story sound old? With art we manage to inhabit the strangeness surrounding us, to make it familiar. For the same reason, it is said, we manage to invert the finite, to touch an eternity that coexists with the briefest time, which means to break continuously the inertia, to transmute it.

Life is just metamorphosis, the endless task of extracting a form from the raw matter of all that happens to us, a new need from the contingent. Art is the science of that irruption, that perpetual superficial fulguration of an inviolable mystery. Is not the painting by Isabel Carnicer precisely an invitation to grasp those moments of endless change? We are the ones that continuously suck in the juice of the visible from the invisible, that draw meaning out of the meaningless outside. Then, is art a technology of the bare existence, with no other means but its inverted grief, shaping the external that corrodes us inside? To shape the virus of living that

reapperas on the outside again and again. In short, to find a scheme in chaos, a calm consisting of the admitted, changed by acceptance, unsteadiness.

Having or not having children, *descending* is to abandon the tower of “excelling oneself”, our hasty wish for a Revolution that does not let things be, to try to obey the unexpected *nature* of that immediacy pulsating there, diminishing the importance of any already known concept. If we say nature, we do not refer to anything regular that can be known from the outside, without its powerful inequality upsetting us. Descending means to achieve the flexibility to hear the signal of what we call “accident”, to obtain a sixth sense in order to turn the unexpected into a monument. To that effect, art means the intrinsic descending to the *celibacy* of an ordinary life, letting that second existence –which whispers under any identity– speak. That is the challenge.

Carnicer might represent, in the style of Santiago Mayo, Agnes Martin or Mark Tobey, a kind of artist that is deeply attentive to the compass of experience. Perhaps nobody can do without that, but in this case, experience constitutes the primary material, and the painter lives engrossed by the force of what scarcely changes, of what is slow because of its being in the centre. Carnicer works the chemistry of these mysterious variations where things to happen must be grasped in a flash, hardly in an interval of the daily show. We imagine her busy with the truthfulness in her painting, as if art were the primary instrument of truth, that which happens when the din disappears. At a time when running into anything is nearly forbidden, this painter seems to be searching for confrontation with a limit, even though putting up a wall in the fog.

Finding a reference in the mist of the real, naming its spectre. Do you remember that mythical moment when things were named? In this case, the artist is less concerned with obtaining a result than with opening a process. This might be the reason why her paintings are arranged in series, in sequences that keep the doubt in the middle of our imperial obsession with a security that is packed with answers. Understanding this gesture in her painting from an aesthetic point of view would be somewhat depressing, like a Saturday luxury that takes pleasure in distant complexities when the important thing is already solved in an extremely pragmatic way.

Could we say Carnicer’s is a work of experience, just as it was said of certain poetry of experience? Be it dramatic or not, the intensity of experience prevents some artists from being the usual intellectuals who skillfully establish strategies and feign a conceptual elitism that keeps them away from simplicity. Far from this model, some artists always start afresh, with an unreserved knowledge that frees them from the common ignorance. Thus, Isabel Carnicer would be busy with the task of maintaining an elemental questioning that cannot be, must not be abandoned.

These slow mutations in brown, grey, ochre, white, black, are presences where each shade breathes with its own vibration. These small paintings might be glass windows out of a secret formula we do not possess, rather it possesses us. On the threshold of the perceptible, that which scarcely exists demands our attention. Carnicer works with small ranging bands, as if the material only consisted of its tearing and joining together, as if the form were the colour surrounded by the border made of torn paper, by the tired repetitions it weaves. The painter uses papers she turns at random into strips and sticks them horizontally onto the canvas or wood. The colour-impregnated wound alludes to the trauma originated by every form, every icon of experience. In the beginning, there was the torn form, the division that redoes us. Afterwards, all the names.

The final result reminds us of the dappling of a wood, its chequered leaves. On the one hand, the coriaceous, the flakes of the fortress conquered step by step, with its isomorphia between the vegetable and the animal. On the other hand, the grass that grows in between, inviting us to want the leaves of meaning, this vegetation of a life we cannot foresee. A leaf is a leaf is a leaf: repetition is the message, it draws meaning from fate. Symmetry, similar wavebands, the sustained redundancy refines the initial murmur till it turns it into subject.

Skin of snake, of animal that becomes blind on devoting its energy to the outer slough. In these shining surfaces, meaning reappears inside a pensive multiplication. As if it were telling us: you will repeat the lesson a thousand times till it sounds in your ears, till you learn it by heart. It is obvious that the author has been *there*, that she has used up the meaning in those layers of experience. The secret variations allude to the task of drawing freedom from fate, of finding choice in falling. Our narcissistic obsession with what we choose becomes the meaning of what we have not chosen. Far from a strident provocation, the painter seems to opt for a slow communication, drop by drop, leaf by leaf. Carnicer uses the language of what ends up meaning at the price of holding herself in her wound, reiterating at first a scarcely perceptible difference. Contemplating this work means to follow the day that changes its skin, the hundred seasons each day has. A strip for each inaudible event. Her work spells out a kind of strength in need of no boasts, for it proves itself time after time in the vigor of things.

To give a second opportunity to things, to the strips of the day coming to an end. Perhaps a softly spoken yes and the courage of acceptance are enough for the world to change. Paper reveals then its grains, it turns into another material to take care of and to work with. In this uncertain path, materials do not exist previously, they are something to be created in an *ex nihilo* process through the mist. It may be possible even for a work like this to look for a good relationship with the routine of the hours, being their companion without any violence, agreeing to a sort of collaboration with the tedium of any ordinary day. Plaiting, sticking across, weaving, do not they mean to use the thread of daily blindness to obtain another visibility? In any case, Carnicer does not paint according to the conventions of painting, she does not seem obsessed with its history nor does she waste any time with the contemporary texture of art and all the conceptual network that other artists get perhaps rightfully mixed up with. Rather, she only wants to give shape to the non pictorial outside, that threshold having no narration.

Using the flesh of torn paper to contain the colour, does not it mean to opt for the ignored nature of things? The cathartic game of rhythm, the litany, the prayer. The failure of the mind is the condition for the heart to carry on dreaming. Dealing with the discreet, with the light mutations of the intangible, Carnicer achieves an emission on paper, a reality seen through the screen of our impotence, of an inevitable retirement. It is not so much a question of reproducing the visible, Klee said, as of making invisible the visible. For example, tearing and sticking silk-screen prints by Gordon Matta-Clark, using disposable materials to take them out of context and find other streaks of meaning in them. With this free use of the serial process, the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone. Light and shade duality, the vibration in colour, its alternation and superposition, make up a resonant silence in which we are able to live the prose of the world again.

Ignacio Castro Rey
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English translation: Coro Acarreta