



ISABEL ECHARRI

Vida y muerte (life and death)

15th of November 2012 - 4th of March 2013

A study of the iconographic values in the work of Isabel Echarri is decisive when it comes to facing up to its meaning and its potential significance because, in addition to what is already clear, there is a subtle secrecy enclosed in the form and the material. A study should not stop at – and this is what is interesting – the morphology which is made reality – with variables – in forms made with paper or from paper; this is the more or less textured base material into which we need to meticulously plunge to get beneath the specific appearances, shredding the universe of the subtle objective contributions and their relationships with with the texts which are frequently inscribed to discover the metaphors and allegories which are underlying and which contain the poetic-philosophical flow of her intentions.

Almost as we come to understand that white is not a colour but rather a material, a material resulting first, from sublimeness and only then perfection, we begin to realize that paper is also used as a visual system, a kind of tissue which sustains and at the same time is in itself a work. The blank concept, a priori, contains the entire chromatic spectrum and is a response to a need for the figuration of an evanescent and slight essence which is – or has been – ashes before being fire and before that, form (1). Gold, which also comes through or else often extends itself over the concave reliefs of the forms, is a trace of incandescence since the sacred ritual calls for these steps through alchemy although it also is, and for itself, light and heat.

In the work of Isabel Echarri there are also elements taken from nature: sand, cane, branches, dried agave leaves, palm fibres, salt, snails...

It might be said that none of them is formally structural but rather accessories. The categories around which Isabel Echarri arranges these elements go from the useful where they support, enclose or hold the aesthetics when they are interlinked, pulsate and perforate. Jointly, the nature of these minute fragments is common to them all and invariably refer to the habitat, the setting and

local circumstances; this terrain where the artist creates her work which is none other than the Island of Formentera.

Arrabal can be found in the works of Isabel Echarri in the poems and texts written quite literally above them. It might be said that the texts are preliminary prior to the constructions and shapes and therefore maintain a relationship with the work which they iconically condition.

This collaboration between artists, between word and image, between concept and form is a product of a distant time and therefore is already sufficiently drenched in a treatment of justice and respect to be found in the signature of both. A personal and at the same time amicable proximity come together in an artistic syntony which represents – for the purposes of the classification of both vanguardism and a range of other –ismos – the link with the great surrealist movement and more than anything with Dadá. The twin qualities of these works consists of their being read and seen simultaneously, to become an intellectual and aesthetic value, a weave of two threads which ought to be indissolubly felt, processed and understood.

In reality Isabel Echarri is the creator of her own domain. Here is one of the rare and fortunate cases where style does not get in the way of the necessary freedom which both the viewer and the creator need to deal with the work. The sensitive territory constructed and given life by Isabel is also blank conceptually in the sense that one does not become tangled nor confused or marked but rather, is a proposal freely made to oneself in an honest and sincere manner. When this field is opened up others are invaded and from this the inclination to create atmospheres which commit the space in its entirety. It is not surprising that in the other part of her life which takes place in Paris, Echarri's 'work' has taken place in the theatrical realm. Therefore, 'Vida y muerte' is an invitation to undergo a total experience which involves all of the senses.

Passing through the exhibition in the Sala de Armas (Weapons Room) at the MACE (Museu d'Art Contemporani d'Eivissa) leads to an understanding of the journey which is life, marked as it is by the times and the numbers – statistics – which like a framework support the memories and recollections of what has been. At the same time there is an unbreakable rhythm which impregnates what has to be far beyond the existential limit of the individual. "Vida y muerte" has a profound dramatic meaning; it is an invitation to journey through a symbolic labyrinth which as such confuses its beginning with its ending and which sets out or which culminates with its four threads. Everything is symbolic:

the circumference, the four, the salt, the sand, the numbers and the clocks. The 'vanitas' are themselves also symbolic, those items which like windows or cases enclose the feeling of the fleetingness of life and the profound conviction that everything which is corporeal is also ephemeral.

Inevitably, anguish may arise when we discover our spatial-temporal limits although a transcendent liberation may result which has a lot to do with what is intangible and ineffable. A strange contradiction as it might be said that the elimination of the limits should not be liberating but rather the contrary. If all of this is possible it is thanks to the beauty which becomes the greatest possibility of salvation which comes from the forms in which the chessboard is laid out: as a stage and a set of rules for the irredeemable possibility of the being in this world. Chess (2): the game where all of the facets of our capacity to confront freedom come together in all of its splendour found in the pieces which Isabel Echarri has selected for the occasion. Everyone has been, is or will be pieces in a chess game: rooks, knights, bishops or pawns. White and potent, the Queen evokes the high point of our plenitude although it also encloses our very condition it can likewise become an enigmatic deathshad.

(1) *Hic iacet pulvis cinis et nihil* (epitaph on the tomb of Cardinal Portocarrero, 1635-1709, in Toledo cathedral).

(2) The many chess sets, boards and pieces with their explanations ordered by King Alfonso the wise (1251-1283).

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