

The Black Drawings by Alejandro Aguilera: Exercises in Admiration

What I attempt to translate to you is more mysterious than anything. It entangles with its own roots of being, in the source of the impalpable feeling.

Paul Cézanne

Alejandro Aguilera is creating, as the decades pass, a work moved by the specific laws of its internal needs. He is creating a singular and diversified art which oscillates between drawing, painting, and sculpture, distant from all slogans, be they rhetorical or plastic; an art made of introspection and meditation, a form of aesthetic Cartesianism that permanently tests each of its gestures and propositions. Aguilera could have used as his own what De Kooning once said to Philip Guston, overwhelmed by the hostile reception that the critics had given to his new paintings: "Do you know what is your rightful subject? It is freedom."

Drawing for Aguilera is a way of asceticism, a daily application destined to obtain that control of the hand that the theoreticians from the Renaissance had described as an essential introduction to the learning of painting. Aguilera's work is contained entirely in the value granted to the selection of ideas since to draw is to physically outline thought, to eliminating, to the rudimentary thing, to a certain form of austerity very near to writing. He mobilizes the resources of an admirable skill, a prodigious drawing and pictorial culture and a penetrating power that make his pictures the truthful deposit of a witness of the inside, an exploration of the abstract and chaste nakedness of this Epiphany of the face of which Lévinas spoke.

With these drawings Alejandro Aguilera creates a personal pantheon of his great models, his heroic artists, his substantial allies. They are signs of empathy, of recognition, emanations of relationships, dominion of feelings, the search for an extended artistic brotherhood, because how could a great artist not look up to those who preceded him? How could he silence this group of far-sighted astray eyes that have scrutinized and revealed in their own way the light of being, the secret polyphony of the real?

That in these allegorical drawings Aguilera pays tribute to the innovating and visionary masters from the XX century beginnings, referring to their physical, psychological or intellectual aspects, is very consequential to the order of his poetic or artistic aims. His veneration of these maladjusted superior individuals who resisted the impositions of the established social

order, the conventionalisms, the lethargy, the Philistinism, and who fought for the individuality, for the difference, for freedom, for ingenuity, for Art (Picasso, Mondrian, Brancusi, Gropius, Chaplin, Lloyd Wright, Lee Krasner...), reminds us to the veneration he feels for singular, original and rebellious thoughts that refuse to split, to compartmentalize the world into impermeable forms or categories, connecting, blending, overlapping, enhancing the sensitivity of man, impelling him to achieve more demands, knowledge, invention, and which similarly to Daedalus knows how to tie meanings with the thread of wisdom.

Black Drawings by Alejandro Aguilera are like a mirror where it is reflected, so promptly more precise, so promptly more ghostly, the presence of his teachers, the continuous allegory that represents his life. When drawing them, Aguilera enters them softly, then internalizes them, owns them, asking them who they are and simultaneously declares who he is or who he would want to be. They represent the effort to return *to form a body with the bone of music of the soul that lies in Pandora's Box* (Artaud).

If we spoke of a materialization of memory, we will be saying a great deal about Alejandro Aguilera's drawings. Loans from retinal persistence phenomena or innumerable references to art history are obviously present in them. His drawings are the reasoned fruits of a long process of filtering which condenses a life, a body, a character, a time and are irradiated by them.

These drawings are emblematic of the possibility and the necessity of art to be realized outside any causality or illusory contingency and they suitably illustrate Degas' conception that drawing *is not about form but about the way one sees form*. What it is most important for Aguilera is the conceptual statute of drawing which constitutes the more direct artistic result of an extremely concentrated, selective, precise perception, which is similar to a diagnosis, to a prospection. It is not as much about representing volumes and things in space, but about suggesting what Ingres called *the inner form*.

Aguilera starts from the principle that drawing, painting, the direct conversion of visions with crayons or brushes, conserves its supremacy in spite of all the apparatuses and contemporary visual machines used to trigger memory, knowledge, and that even though he lives in a convulsive time hostile to the overly calm painting.

Aguilera proposes an ethics at the same as an aesthetic. What is his intention? To give back to art its moral, didactic and hedonic power, to

restore the lost aura of the image, that is to say, to resist the profusion of the reproducible icons and to teach the difficult art of reading an image. Aguilera knows that that art only can be explained by art, whatever the social pressures might be.

We cannot say that Aguilera's drawings are political in nature, if we understand this term in its more restrictive sense. They are not anecdotally political but they are inscribed at the heart of a policy of the image. Aguilera returns to the true nature of painting and drawing to understand that they appeal to thinking, to memory, that they are the expression of an intellectual content, of a poetic language, of a factor of expression, of possession rather than of representation.

Aguilera shares the Hegelian concept of the portrait: the portrait must only transmit the intrinsic nature, that which belongs to the immutable essence of the model and not to the accidental, which is fortuitous, empirical, and transitory. His work consists in revealing all the signs which from the core of the appearance sends us beyond the image towards its intelligible content. He helps to read the deep structure of objects and beings without forgetting that drawing involves white spaces, breathing, an emptiness; like the silences in music.

Alejandro Aguilera, similarly to his teachers here represented, is subjected to his visual passions and is allergic to the idea that a work of art could be limited to a style. His fundamental aim is to widen the territory of art and to look for new forms of expression. With Aguilera, it is not about modernism or primitivism; it is not about drawing, painting, sculpture, but it is about art and, consequently, it is about sensitive, thinking intensities. His entire work is a reflection on art. Art considered as a tool to apprehend and to reveal, to catch forces. Art regarded as a mystic and sensual experience, as figural thought, as a widened consciousness of the world.

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