

PINTURA

Pinturas recientes

Harper explora los límites de la pintura realista
extremadamente detallada

POR ELVIRA RODRÍGUEZ



Valère (n°3)

Victoria



El artista Richard Harper (California, 1951) hubiese podido elegir la pintura abstracta pero decidió dedicarse a un realismo objetivo extremadamente realista. Harper estudió en Los Ángeles, y vive desde 1986 en Francia.

Cada una de sus pinturas conlleva un largo y meticuloso ritual. Harper da vida y sustancia a sus modelos utilizando muchas capas muy finas y translúcidas de pintura; el color de la carne presenta una realidad inquietante, sinuosa, como

las curvas de las venas. Algunos de los cuadros le llevan meses o hasta años para realizar. Este anacrónico uso del tiempo denota una larga gestación de cada obra. Subconscientemente, nuestros ojos siguen las fases sucesivas de

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elaboración de la pintura: la postura del cuerpo, sus curvas, su superficies y su textura. Gradualmente nos lleva a una observación muy detallada, y tenemos la sensación de estar mirando a través del barro de la creación humana; como si enfocáramos desde el exterior de la carne hasta el interior. De pie, reclinadas o en posición fetal, las modelos declaran su existencia con la distancia que da la subjetividad denegada: *'He elegido el cuerpo humano en su condición natural como mi principal objeto de trabajo. Para mí es el objeto ideal para pintar. Para mantener el foco de mi atención en este peculiar objeto he adoptado un acercamiento minimalista a mi trabajo. Intencionalmente he limitado el objeto*

de mi pintura a lo siguiente: un cuerpo humano sobre una plataforma con un fondo neutral. Pinto siempre al modelo en tamaño real, el cuerpo llena el lienzo llegando casi a los bordes del mismo. Es el único y el más importante objeto de la pintura.'

Sin ropa ni accesorios que nos distraigan, la desnudez nos permite enfocar nuestra atención estrictamente en el cuerpo. Un cuerpo único, similar pero diferente a otros, anónimo pero individual. Frente a estas presencias humanas ilusorias tan perfectamente recreadas, Richard Harper nos confronta con una imagen de nosotros mismos. Pero más allá de nuestra realidad física se trata de una realidad mucho más esencial, inmaterial e impenetrable. Harper deja a nuestra meditación las conclusiones que podamos sacar de nuestra fisicalidad y la relación que ésta mantiene con los atributos que puedan o no existir en nuestro interior. ■

Christelle



Marie Eve N°II



Algunos de los cuadros le llevan meses o hasta años para realizar.

Harper da vida y sustancia a sus modelos utilizando muchas capas muy finas y translúcidas de pintura.

His work is dynamic; it questions our time and envisions a future not so far ahead. There is coherence between the materials he uses and his discourse; Royo investigates and integrates different new techniques with old ones. To make a sculpture he will use laser, hologram, aluminium, bronze or polyester. In his pictorial work he never ceases to surprise us, in it we find together different techniques: he uses the computer, lights, oils, car paints.... His paintings are very realistic, though they hold characteristics that do not exist in real life, thus he makes us realize that there is a more profound discourse behind the figure.

His most recent projects are being made for the Los Angeles Art Show, Art Madrid, and the cover of a book presenting the Alhondiga Museum in Bilbao, with Luis Royo with whom he has painted some works that are to be seen in the book *Dead Moon*, and the scenery for a video clip of singer Noah Francis. Recently a book has been published on his work. ■

Oleg Kulik

Oleg Kulik was born in Kiev in 1961. He is based in the Winzavod, which he launched with the « Veryu » (I believe) exhibition in February 2007 for the second Moscow contemporary art biennale. The event brought together some sixty Muscovite artists around his Mongolian yurt where he welcomed artists and visitors. Since he started out at the Regina gallery, Kulik has



regularly organised collective exhibitions where he draws his resources from among an artistic community that he stimulates and fascinates with his ability to establish himself on the Western scene. In June 2007, Moscow's Central House of Artists organised the first highly anticipated retrospective of his work.

After training as a sculptor, Kulik devoted himself to giving plastic form to the slogan of the Gorbachev years: Glasnost (transparency). He cut out large sheets of perspex, which he placed in nature or in the city, a work that he would return to at a later date. To break free from the confined circle of art and enter directly into the rapidly expanding media scene of the time, he transformed himself into a dog. He thus took a stance against conceptual art that was dominating the Muscovite scene. His carnal (he is always naked and puts his body to the test), aggressive and spectacular actions were in opposition to the intellectual and confidential nature of the conceptual

same paradise; naturalised effigies of mass media stars entering the natural history museum; films of travels in Mongolia where man lives in harmony with nature... Each time he sheds his skin, Kulik finds the refuge that harbours his shaman in his Mongolian yurt.

The mad dog

This is the first « dog performance » by Kulik. It was to become an emblem of the state of Russian art and the state of Russian society as a whole. At the entrance Kulik was guarding deprecated values, personified by Alexander Brener, rebel artist and poet: «art», «masterpiece», «talent», «educated public» etc. Naked in the frost, losing his hearings, Kulik barked, rushed on a chain, pushed spectators off their feet and bit them. His

movement. His barking was a reply to their essentially linguistic approach to art. He suggests that man may be regenerated through animals and has invented the concept of « Zoophrenia », a combination of schizophrenia and zoophilia. His Tolstoyan quest for lost harmony and the move beyond the opposition of art and life resonates with an age of the search for authentic Russian values. In 1995, he exported his dog performances to Zurich and attacked the public at the entrance to an international contemporary art exhibition. He repeated the feat in Stockholm in 1996 and triggered a real debate within the international art landscape. In the late 1990 s, Kulik experimented with other forms of art. Always spectacular, his works operate at the limits of art and reality, nature and culture, life and death. Videos in a cage of Kulik and his dog in a Russian setting; a sculpture of Tolstoy enclosed under a working henhouse; photomontages where stuffed animals and a frolicking Adam and Eve live together in the

throat hoarse with barking, unaware of cold and danger, Kulik rushed into the thick of the traffic and managed to stop it.

St Sebastian and Gooses

Village Krasnopolije (Chernigov region). 1998

The priority of everything that is « natural » in culture makes it possible for Oleg Kulik to claim that every cultural gesture, no matter how elaborate and perfect its form might look, is born alive due to its nature, therefore it has the right to live. Surely, a severe artist must commit to the recycle bin variations that run astray from the clarity of his or her outline. Yet, as a rule, with these unplanned pictures gone, the initial outline is deprived of most of its warmth and vitality. Does the artist have the right to kill in cold blood those lively,

merry, but bastardly images? If he doesn't, where is their ecological niche? (by: Mila Bredikhina)

Windows

First of all, he or she is to see himself or herself, his or her reflection painted into the ideal, dead landscape without any traces of human activity. It is a paradise, an ideal world of the anthropocentrist. Here he continues to see wildlife. To please him I cleaned the landscapes from wires and pasture fences. There is no wildlife like that anywhere, no matter where you look for it: in the West, in the East, in the North or in the South. Even in Montenegro. It is a dead world. The living world is different. It is dirt, pain, death. It is not the spectator's evaluation that is really important for

me in this project, it is the formal doubling of the spectator who is painted into the landscape (where the artist finds a place for him) and observes it from the outside (he positions himself). The spectator evaluates himself as a character and shares the responsibility with the author of the project. (By: Kulik). ■

Richard Harper's Recent paintings

Biography

Born in 1951 in California (U.S.A.), Richard Harper studied at the Los Angeles Art Center College of Design where he graduated in 1975. After having lived in California, he moved to France in 1986. He regularly shows his work in France and in the United-States.

Richard Harper explores the limits of realist painting: he could have chosen abstraction but he preferred to devote his work to an extremely detailed objective realism.

Each of his paintings involves a long and meticulous ritual. By the multi-layering of several very thin translucent coats of paint, Harper gives life and substance to his models; the colour of the flesh presents a most unsettling reality, sinuous, like the curves of veins.... Several months or even several years are sometimes necessary to achieve one painting. This inherent time frame of production, which may seem anachronistic today, is demonstrated by the long gestation of each of his works.

Unconsciously, our eye follows the successive pha-





ses of the elaboration of his painting: posture of body, its curves, its surface and then its texture. Gradually led to a very detailed observation, we have the impression of looking through the clay of human creation; like a zooming in from the outside to the inside of the flesh. Standing, reclined or curled up, his models declare their existence with all the distan-

ce that fits with the refusal of subjectivity lauded by the painter:

"I have chosen the human body, in its natural condition as my principle subject. For me it represents the ideal object of painting. To maintain the focus on this singular subject I have adopted a minimalist approach to my work. I have intentionally limited the subject of my

paintings to this: a human body on a platform with a neutral background. Always painted life size, the body fills the space, almost reaching the sides of the canvas. It constitutes the only and the most important object of the painting."

Without clothes or accessories likely to divert our eyes, nudity enables us to focus our attention stric-

tly on the body: a unique body, similar but different to others, anonymous but individualized. In front of these illusory presences of so perfectly re-created human forms, Richard Harper confronts us, in a certain sense, with an image of our selves. But beyond our physical reality is the question of another reality as much essential, immaterial and impenetrable. Harper leaves it to us to make our own conclusions about our physicality and its relationship to this indescribable attribute, which exists or not in ourselves. ■

Christina Rosenvinge's *Tu Labio Superior* (Your upper lip)

How to write about an artist whom I barely know? One of the things I like less about journalism is the gigantic danger there is of deforming the portrait of the portrayed in the article. I avoid the danger with the same passion the Spartans avoided cowardice. Thus, if I do not wish to inform about the artist, I decide consciously to limit myself into writing from a strictly subjective point of view: what emotions, images and sensations the creation of the artist awakes in me.

Christina Rosenvinge's new record *Your upper lip*, is a collection of eleven songs sung in Spanish that coexist harmoniously with one another. In the ears and the brain of this listener they follow each other in perfect ease and beauty. The first song, *The adequate distance* breathes an air similarly coloured as some songs of her New Yorker record *Foreign Land*

version française

Richard Harper *Peintures récentes* Biographie

Né en 1951 en Californie (U.S.A.), Richard Harper a étudié au Los Angeles Art Center College of Design dont il sort diplômé en 1975. Après avoir vécu en Californie, il s'est installé en France en 1986. Ayant pris pour sujet l'image du corps humain, il expose régulièrement ses peintures en France et aux États-Unis.

Richard Harper explore les limites de la peinture : il aurait pu choisir l'abstraction, il préfère la voie d'un réalisme objectif extrêmement détaillé. Question de rapport au temps et de tempérament !

Chacune de ses peintures procède d'un long et minutieux rituel. Par de régulières applications de fines couches de peinture translucides, Harper donne vie et matière à ses modèles ; leurs carnations apparaissent ainsi dans leur plus troublante réalité, rythmées par les courbes sinueuses des veines et des vaisseaux sanguins... Plusieurs mois voire plusieurs années s'avèrent parfois nécessaires à l'achèvement d'une oeuvre. Cette temporalité, qui peut paraître anachronique aujourd'hui,

indique le degré de gestation inhérente à son travail. Inconsciemment, notre regard suit les étapes successives de l'élaboration de la peinture : la posture du corps, ses courbes, sa surface puis sa texture. Ce mouvement progressif vers l'observation détaillée semble traver-

ser l'enveloppe corporelle. Comme un zoom avant, de l'extérieur vers l'intérieur de la chair. Debout, allongés ou recroquevillés, ses modèles déclinent leur être avec toute la distance qui sied au refus de la subjectivité prônée par le peintre : « Si j'ai adopté une approche minimaliste dans



mes tableaux, c'est parce que le corps humain, dans son état naturel, représentait l'objet idéal pour la peinture. Partant de cette déduction, j'ai consciemment limité le sujet de mes tableaux à ceci : un corps humain sur une plateforme avec le vide en arrière-plan, évitant ainsi toute distraction de l'esprit. Le corps, toujours peint en taille réelle, remplit l'espace, atteignant presque les bords du tableau et il constitue l'unique et le plus important objet du tableau. »

Sans vêtement ni accessoire susceptible de conditionner l'oeil, la nudité permet de focaliser l'attention sur le corps uniquement. Corps unique car semblable mais différent à tous les autres, anonyme mais individualisé. Devant cette présence illusoire de corps si parfaitement recréés, Richard Harper nous confronte à notre propre image. Se regarder objectivement, dépouillé de tout jugement a priori, est un exercice bien délicat. Au-delà de notre réalité physique se pose la question d'une autre réalité tout aussi essentielle, immatérielle et impénétrable. Harper nous laisse libre ici d'achever notre description par cet attribut indicible qui nous subsiste ou non... ■

GALERIAS. Fernando Gutierrez: La Laboral, Gijón. Reflejos de la India: La Casa Encendida, Madrid. Kirstine Roepstorff: MUSAC, León. Marcel Bohumil: Begoña Malone, Madrid. Nono Bandera: Casa Borne, Antequeta. Oleg Kulik: Galerie Rabouan Moussin, Paris. Richard Harper: Galerie Alain Blondel, Paris.

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