

“Pepe Dámaso will paint a man’s body as if he were painting some occult and endless god: he will paint the body and the skull, the body and the body’s shadow, the mysterious body, the expectant body, the body as flowing current, as dispersion, the body as mummy, the body as remains...”

José Saramago

Desire and the dream of desire are the tools without which it would be impossible to organize or lend meaning to Dámaso’s world. A narrative body and a desiring body: the body of a dreaming painting. In his most recent exhibition in the Casa Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon, Dámaso presented work that centered around the great Portuguese writer and his environment in Lisbon. The catalogue’s texts were written by José Saramago and Andrés Sánchez Robayna, who, in their essays, penetrate Dámaso’s baroque and contradictory universe. This inwardly-dreaming paper signifies - to a certain extent - Dámaso’s re-encounter with himself: echoes of his own voices, the definition that names his work, that drinks of its own paths, of its own fountains. In this exhibition, Dámaso rediscovers — on paper, through collage, in drawing, in sequence and temptation, in Antinous and the triangular dreams, in heteronyms and

Pepe
Dámaso:
...Sohna por
este papel
dentro

...

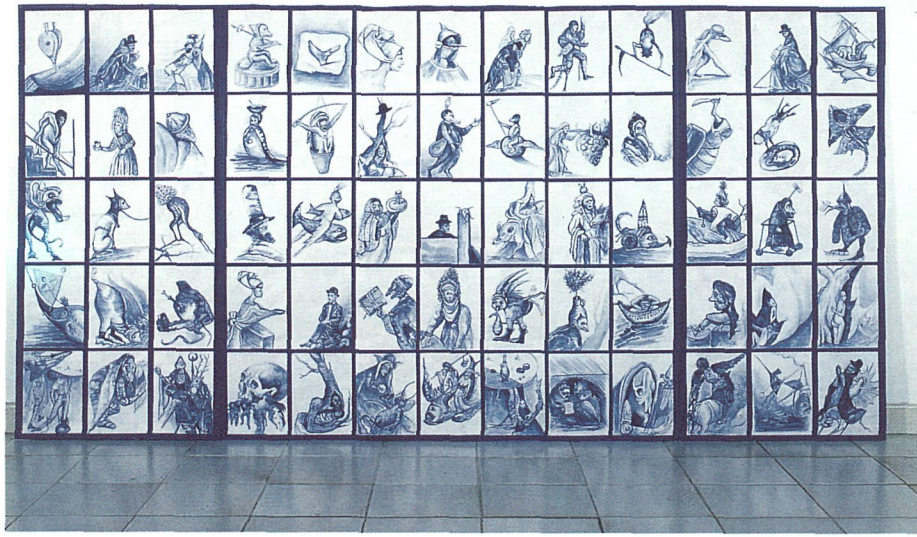
ANTONIO ZAYA

the sentimental journey — what is virtually his own diary, memories of his own biography.

In this sense, the exhibition is, to some degree, a review of Dámaso’s ongoing concerns, of his everyday tools of paper, of dreams, of the body, of folds, of drawings, of mosaics, of voyages, of time, of Orpheus and of the skull. But, above all, of film, film composed of sequences. While the work may recover Dámaso’s basic formal and narrative themes, such as literature, the body and collage (which are fearlessly united in painting), Dámaso also maintains an enormous loyalty to and coherence with his ancestors and earlier work, which he visits again and again, going beyond formal discourse and nostalgia. In any event, in this year’s *Sentimental Journey*, Pepe Dámaso also clears away his habitual and characteristic styles, but only in order to recover, yet again, the moment of his own step, revealing himself to be more eclectic, multiple and plural than ever before. In this exhibition, Dámaso seems to pay a debt of gratitude to the neighboring nation, and specifically to Lisbon, the white city of films: it is also the city where Dámaso found love on various occasions during the nights of fado and Portuguese white wine. Not that Dámaso needs to straighten out his course! All his work overlaps and blends into his own life, partially because



Pepe Dámaso. *Antinoos*, n° 1 and n° 2. Photo: Alejandro Delgado.



Pepe Dámaso. *Tentaciones de Pessoa*. Photo: Alejandro Delgado.

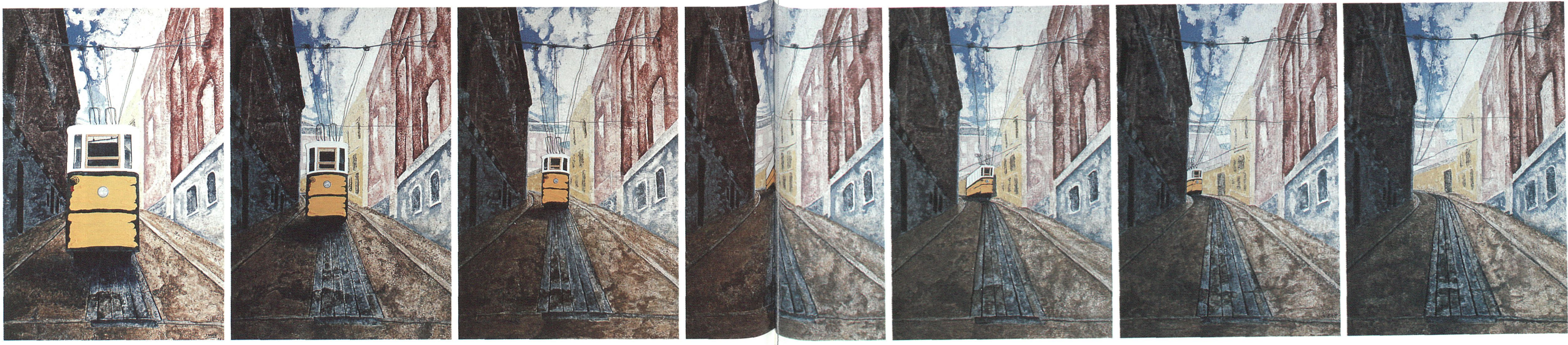
Dámaso seems to feel the need to transcend his own life, to the point of confusing it with his own creativity. Art and life, life and art: for Dámaso, these are not parallel phenomena that never

meet. On the contrary, each nourishes the other, in an endless round-trip voyage, in a vicious circle that perpetually returns. In order to approach this work with rigor, we must pay

attention to Dámaso himself, as much as to his work; he explains the work without making excuses for it.

But we must also pay attention to the tram: displacement. This is not the first time that Dámaso has begun a sentimental journey, the journey of his painting, of his trip on the Trans-Siberian, of his journey to Machu Picchu, of his trip to Aswan. The Lusitania and the trams that run from the Upper City to the Alfama also speak the journey of his painting, of his personal and furtive contacts that dare not speak their name, but that nonetheless achieve their expression in the very instant of their displacement, which makes them irretrievable. Lisbon, Pessoa, Negreiros, Saramago and *Sonha por este papel dentro*, all of these are to be found in Dámaso's painting.

Pepe Dámaso. *Lisboa-Tranria*. Photo: Alejandro Delgado.



Pepe Dámaso. *El Elevador*. Photo: Alejandro Delgado.

