

CANARY ISLANDS NEXUS

Art has no natural frontiers;
its own incarnation certifies the shipwreck of shielded identities.

Art has no flags or limits,
Although some would shake and venerate it and others
Wound themselves with the edges of its unknown abysses.

This is what we have been showing
Since we took up the management of ATLANTICA
Eight issues ago.

None of this will change because as the CAAM
Was born like an island reached by
Waves from all the seas, by other
Many waves.

Even so, our priority, attention and universal guideline
By no means hinders us from seeking ourselves,
To interrogate our history, our present, and to become an interior mirror.
Nay, our reflection is a consequent demand.

So far we have explored anarchically our own territory,
Through the works arriving at the open doors of our dwelling.
As of now, introspection and self-criticism will have their own, permanent space.

A regular section (not an insert), in our index.
A space, hence permeable, not isolated,
Near, although subject to the same concepts of plurality,
Contrast and dialogue among the diversities that have signified our signs
of universal identity, as a crossroads between continents and cultures.

Antonio Zaya



NEXUS

This title, taken from the essay "Survival or Renaissance" (by the Canarian art critic Fernando Castro, and published in the catalogue of the exhibition "Since the Seventies", curated by his fellow Canarian Carlos Díaz-Betрана), would probably not be a fair summary of all of the Canary Islands's artistic output during the 1970s. Although my article, included alongside those of these colleagues and friends of mine, also reflects the mood of this title, taken out of context, I shall try to describe this controversial generation, in an attempt to add new perspective to the analysis which is certainly not exhausted by this exhibition. Fernando Castro himself has already revealed his view of the 1970s in another CAAM show entitled "El Museo Imaginario" ("The Imaginary Museum"). But, might a second, and perhaps even a third exhibition be called for, since we seem to have lost so much time?

Perhaps we haven't lost time, although new readings which address the complexity of a group (which, without really forming a group, has the hallmarks of a team) will always be necessary, if we consider their common, if not identical, itineraries. In any event, this is not the second or the third time that the work of most of these artists, now reaching their fifties, has been

Melancholic Reflection on Time Lost

shown together. Nor will it be the last. And why do Fernando Castro, Díaz-Betрана and I bring together such

disparate artists, time and time again? Is it a matter of age? Or, friendship? Are these legitimate reasons to organize an exhibition? I do not understand how anyone can ignore his own experience in art, and far less in life. When art and life are intertwined it is even harder to understand, for it is impossible to rid oneself of oneself, without ridding oneself of everything else.

So, what sense does this title make? It is an attempt to make so much of lost time, of the untold hours of life together on some islands off the Sahara desert after 1968, during the last days of the Franco dictatorship, at a distance and in a captivity that each one must project, in accordance with his ability, knowledge and karma.



"Since the Seventies", works by Bordes, Monagas and Alamo.

In any case, the elements making up the geographical and cultural crossroads within which these artists debate (and not all of these artists were involved, and some who were, during Spain's political transition in the mid-1970s, are absent), even today pass light tongues of fire over the hands and heads of our generation.

The broken pieces of a totalitarian system were used to build the platform on which the relationship of these artists with society was conducted. The dimension of the political support –democratic, but still only incipient– for this generation of artists was vitiated by the tutelage and *embourgeoisement* not only of the discourse itself –which turned inward and metaphysical– but also of its independence. Such docility contrasted sharply with the fierce passion spent in defending utopian positions which lent us our social utility during the dictatorship.

This generation –my generation– reminds me of the soldier trained in the martial arts during wartime, who finds that when his training is complete, peace has broken out. Some artists burn themselves out in a frenzy, so as to meet with posterity in their own lifetimes. It is a question of time. A question of breaking down, rather than wearing out, which is another important question. Time, always time, but do we mean the time we have lost, or the time that remains an unknown quantity, and which we don't want to call our own, since we decline from showing our true faces, in order to remain in favor with the public?

This generation has been left without questions, because of its own long silence, and it remains inert in its own practice, pausing to look back towards the shadow it has cast.

Nonetheless, its multiple arms and its multifarious identity offer us a

hitherto unseen panoramic view of the false identity, stagnant and monolithic, merely folkloric, which has circulated as common currency.

The euphoria and the delusions of grandeur of the early years were not followed by their brothers –enthusiasm and passion– but rather, and understandably, only calm, although this quietude soon began to take on the guise of death, swaddled in fleeting fame and a volatile economy. Lacking any infrastructure, any tradition, any collectors, and with scarcely any galleries (those that did exist were pivotal), the attitude of these artists was simply heroic. But there was no market, and this generation wasn't ready for a market or for competition and criticism.

If even today some members of the Canary Islands artistic community are lost in confusion, along with the domino effect of the crisis of the international market, this is also due to the non-hierarchical coexistence of the professional, the institutional and the political, and intrusion of mere commercialism or propaganda. All the networks circulate at the same time, and together make up a dense –if fragmentary and random– web that takes on the appearance of a face from a distance. A multiple, mongrel, promiscuous and egalitarian face, and a distance from which the peaks and summits don't count but rather, only the individual broadcasters on whatever frequency, a bottomless sack in which



"Since the Seventies", work by López Salvador.



"Since the Seventies". *Knife*, 1976-1995.

wheat and chaff have the same value. This anarchical, cosmopolitan, frivolous, melancholic and even picturesque character serves to underline the diversity of options and revived trends (chiefly the trend of Surrealism, but also

of conceptual art, of junk art and, more recently, the naturalism). It is a strategy that emulates the dynamics of the most dominant trends, but which seem hollow and wanting. Here there is no demand, and the supply waiting in the wings

anticipates the consolidation and assimilation of the provincial market in which we continue to struggle.

Anyway, we run the risk of disdaining modernity without even having assimilated the contemporary. If nothing is done to remedy this, it will lead to a definitive cultural collapse. Not only due to the exhaustion of the capacity for falsification, but also due to the advent of new centres such as the CAAM, whose roles are polyvalent, pedagogic, disseminatory, reflexive and self-critical of their own peculiar environment, and perhaps less isolated since their founding. Such centres are devoted to debate, and encourage not only our constants and achievements, but, looking beyond mere survival, are also promoting an artistic renaissance, capable of making itself heard within a necessarily hybrid discourse.

To speak of the 1970s generation as one constituted by orphans, may seem ironic or even sarcastic, since this was probably the only generation of Canary Islands' artists to have enjoyed much political support. And yet it is true: for while this generation had an undeniable moral force, its power never reached beyond our island shores. Many of these artists feel as if they had died in childhood, too soon, like Juan Hernández and Cándido Camacho, who lost their lives by the wayside.

It is to this generation of the 1970s which we will return again and again at the moment of this convulsive and surprising *fin de siècle*, because it is the



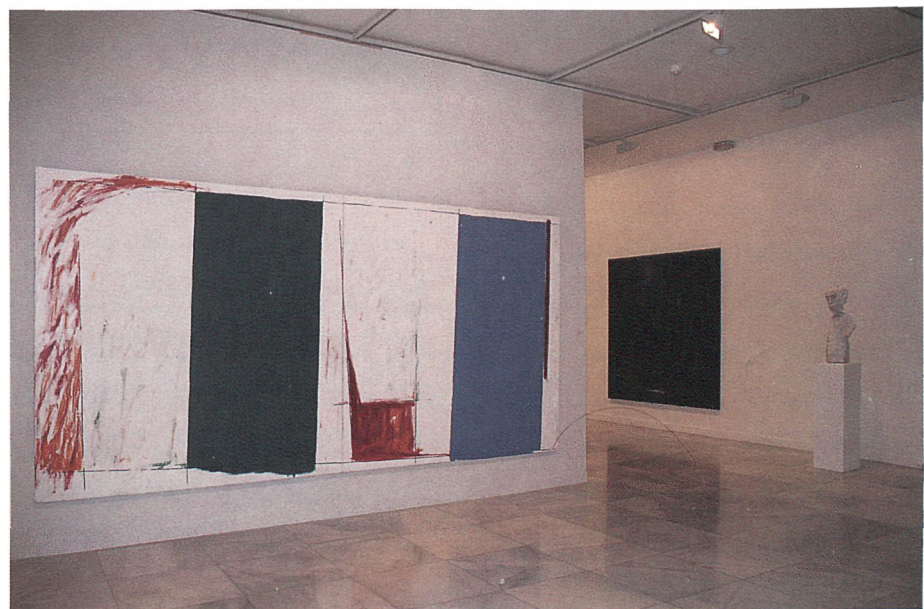
"Since the Seventies",
installation by
Leopoldo Emperador.

paradigm of our time –global,
cosmopolitan, parochial and replete with
a misery and pettiness in this
entertainment of spectacle and art. of
well-told lies and truths falling on
uncomprehending ears. It is easier to
survive than to be reborn, but it is also
less effective and risky. Survival is the

home of mediocrity, while with rebirth,
comes enthusiasm. However, between
cowardice and stillborn ambition, the
greatest opportunity of our history has
been frustrated, an opportunity that the
CAAM has managed to sum up in the
most apt terms, returning again and
again to the analysis of both the

constants and the variables which we
have all tried to articulate regarding the
generation which lies on the other side
of the looking glass, where nobody
recognizes himself. And this, in my view,
is the real nature of the problem.

A.Z.



"Since the Seventies",
works by Gil Bordes
and Gonzalo González.