

## TERRITORIES

“For Doña Maria Ugarte, who preceded me in loving and admiring you...”

Vicente lives in Paris in a studio on the Quai de la Gare, that magical place where the “arts” are open-minded and vibrant. The site is filled by the marine air of the wide-flowing river Seine; lost gulls pick at the garbage in search of bread crusts.

His studio is in the top floor of a building known as the “Refrigerator” for the persistent chill that penetrates it from October until the spring. The walls are filled with art adventurers. In one of the façades, a mountain climber stretches out his leg, trying to cling to the sky.

Vicente opens the door prudently, with a feline gaze and a measured, timid smile; his lips slide back easily, as in the best years of childhood. A spark of complicity lights up his gaze when he begins to speak of the simple and profound things in life. He loves civilisations, the questioners of humanity. Violence shocks him; he neither understands nor accepts it and prefers to maintain a discreet, withdrawn distance. He fears brutality and spiritual vulgarity.

Art and inspiration breathe through him as a man entrenched in his own destiny as creator, a man who is conscious of the responsibility brought on by the pull of his thought. Pimentel thinks and shares; he encloses existential

# Vicente Pimentel: In the Wink of an Eye “Pointing out the Stars”

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uneasiness and wisdom. His speech is measured, attentive and respectful toward the seriousness of what is spoken. He leaves his mark in the earth and his discreet and quiet feelings flow outward like a spring of pure water before it becomes a river. He speaks with passion and love for his home in Barahona, of the patio where he used to work and the working-class, humane neighbors who used to come and visit. He conjures it up like a poet, and his recollections are movement, a smell, a color, a glance; the air, the sky and the earth of the place where he was born are

still within him, in that gleam that shines in his eye when he speaks of his brothers and his mother.

In Vicente Pimentel’s words a profound metaphysics, which also appears in his work, can be felt. His attitude toward success is a total secret. Esteemed by the workings of the international market, Pimentel’s already elevated market value will continue to rise unabated; but he remains cool and distant, with a complete fidelity to his work and a limpid coherence that has been his for 20 years. With immense modesty he gives the assurance that “success cannot be managed nor calculated by an artist”.

Pimentel established himself in Europe in 1978. He received his academic training at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Santo Domingo from 1963 to 1968; his specialised studies were in France from 1972 to 1978, at the School of Art and Architecture in Marseilles and at the Louvre Museum.

Pimentel has had numerous exhibitions in Paris, including two that firmly established him as an important figure in contemporary art: one of these exhibitions, at the well-known Hanin Nocera Gallery next to the Fine Arts School on the Rue Bonaparte, consisted of works on paper; the other, at the Petite Galerie of the Latin Quarter in the Rue de Seine, also consisted of small-scale works on paper. Both ran from

September 17, 1992 to October 24, 1992.

From November 21, 1992 to January 16, 1993, The Hadrien Thomas Gallery offered a sculpture exhibition, marvelously entitled "Between Heaven and Earth". The period of 1991 - 1993 was extremely successful for Pimentel, who was born in Santo Domingo. His success is anchored in the work itself, in striving and in dedication.

In 1991 and 1992 Hanin Nocera brought Pimentel to FIAC, the prestigious art fair in Europe. It should also be pointed out that since 1986 Pimentel has been well-known in Sweden, Denmark and Iceland, where he has received favourable reviews in publications specialising in contemporary criticism as a result of his participation in the Stockholm International Contemporary Art Fair. Collectors from Hong Kong, Japan and the U.S.A. have acquired his works. In France, collectors such as Madame Claude Pompidou (wife of President Georges Pompidou) and Lise Toubon are great admirers of Pimentel. The National Contemporary Art Fund in Paris, Normandy and Martinique all contain work by Pimentel, which can be seen in regional and national museums around France – for instance, in the Museum of Contemporary Art of the City of Paris.

For the past three years Pimentel has worked with signs and traces in the fascinating series entitled *Salvajes*. They are gestures that come straight from the

heart and the lungs, as if they were extensions of his very breath. The hours go by as we lose ourselves in these works. Occasionally, in the superimposed shadows and in the tension between the black and brown brushstrokes, unexpected figures appear: a bull's head, lost in the immensity of Extremadura; and going further, further still, we find Quixote, unsure of himself, on foot without his horse. The optical liberty is tremendous; it is an invitation to release reality and real things from the image, as in "I watch you, I see you, I invent you". These works possess magic and enchantment, offering the liberty of inexplicable and uncontrollable interpretation. They must be moved and shifted in order to find the new forms, the new movements, the new messages.

These intertwined traces give birth to illusions, wonders of the image. Calligraphy from Tibet, Japan, China and Yemen are added in complete optical liberty; authentic inspiration is delivered to the viewer's retina like a metaphor, like those poems of Cavafy and Lorca that spring unaided from a phrase. This is visual art with versification and music. Pimentel's suggestiveness does not remain here: the Abstract Expressionism that he embarks on brings with it a poetical language that is inseparable from the pictorial language itself. It is the height of lofty feeling, enveloped in wonder. It is difficult to know "what it is about", and in this case it doesn't matter, because

something is happening, everything seems to fly and climb. The force of the painter's gesture opens immense black wings that are ready to swallow up a piece of the sky. Why be bothered with letters and words? Confronted by creativity, is it not enough to fulfill the emotional and carnal symbiosis? Pimentel increasingly sets up his work as an untiring pilgrimage, subtly seeking the reduced and condensed sign that might offer us a more efficient emotion, the pure substance of grace.

Here is where mystery is born. Pimentel's work already bears its own genius, its eternal inspiring spirit. Now it is enshrouded within a spiritual wisdom and a bio-energetic plasticity, where the aesthetic element becomes sublime and divine. This is transcendental work; it generates a dynamic of mobile values that transform us into diaphanous beings. It does not deal with formal and technical aesthetics, but rather with a mysticism that sparks our virtual flame. Facing Pimentel's signs, we have shared the mark of the mystical light.

At this time Pimentel is in a very personal space within abstract painting, containing a limitless expressionist force. When he unrolls his lengths of paper (that are 10 or 12 metres long and three metres wide), the brushstrokes are situated and move within the space like the finger of a bewitched pianist at the keyboard.

The brushstrokes are directed

Vicente Pimentel. *Untitled*, 1996.



toward the gaze in order to whisper what cannot be spoken, the sacred, forever in silence. His works suggest the signs and enigmas found in the caves of Altamira and Roncevaux and Perche; what is most compelling is that Pimentel's art is able to conjure up a realm of pictorial anthropology.

pre-history. Those browns and blacks, those colours of the earth and of tile roofs – he extracts them from the marks of our planet, where he digs in search of natural pigments that make their way to the canvas via his creative genius. Someday this work should be exhibited in one of the caves used by the Taino

up close. And then, in the wink of an eye, the evidence leaps forward: the canvas opens like a starry night overhead; and all the stars, even the smallest of them, light up and harmoniously join the Marks in Space. This is why we must come out of the cave and open up to the blue and indigo skies of the master.

Meanwhile, the series *Salvajes* continues “inhabiting” the painter’s studio. Pimentel goes beyond the physical material; his work is made with his very breath and movement. The splatters, the washes, the touches, the fine points and the smudges all belong to risk. With daring, the artist surrenders to a constant relationship between his mystic interiority and his capacity for plastic execution. However, this never involves systematising or “spontaneousism”. The signs respond to a specific virtue; the light and airy canvases that are elevated somewhere between heaven and earth intensify the bond that ties us to memory.

Pimentel knows his origin; he is currently preparing a series of installations under the meaningful title *Cimarrones*. He is deeply involved in the mysticism of man’s relation to creation. He feels and expresses the consciousness of his origin within the globality of human adventure. His overall output confirms the mastery of an artist whose work is felt and enveloped in his own philosophy, thinking with his feet on the ground and his eyes and heart pointing toward the stars...



Vicente Pimentel.

Everything opens up like a space where what is superfluous is cast off, giving free rein to chance and to doubt, as if everything were happening for the first time. Vicente Pimentel is impassioned by what has gone before, and even by

natives of the Dominican Republic in order to reinforce the mark of its origin.

The blue, green and brown extend monochromatically into space, tying themselves into signs of concealed, layered thicknesses that can only be seen