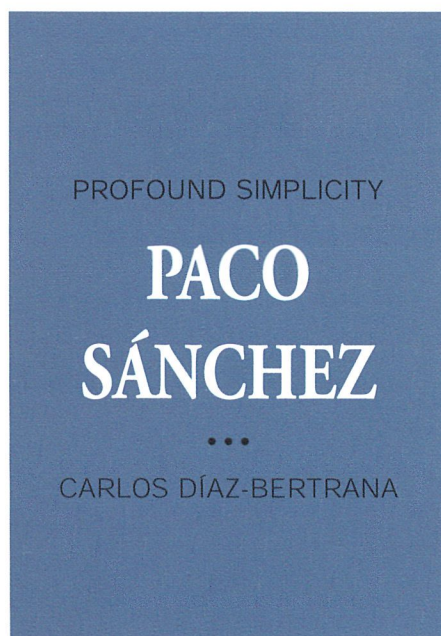


The more intelligent one is, the more stupid.
Jean Dubuffet/Witold Gombowicz.
(Correspondence).

*None of us know anything,
not even do we know or not know,
nor whether knowledge is possible or not,
nor ultimately,
whether something exists, or does not exist.*
Metrodoro, after Cicero.

According to the calendar, Paco Sánchez was born in 1947 and, officially, is therefore middle-aged, but those who know him say that he still lives in the age of wonders. A pre-Socratic philosopher solved the mystery: time can be both measure and thought, but not substance. This is his first major exhibition, from which we can infer an element of strangeness; he is mistrustful of fame and fortune, and values friendship and the need to be a free spirit. He is slight, nervous and unabashed. Like the Saba of Magris, Paco Sánchez possesses the power of innocence, the strength of a child who delights in observing a flower while treading on an insect. Malice is beyond him and he lives in Tamaraceite, a district of Las Palmas which sounds vegetable, edible and Arabic. There he has two beautiful daughters whom he still looms over, and a studio with a window which looks out over the landscape.

This landscape never appears in his paintings, and neither do the people who cross it. It is the scorching south and the inhabitants of time and memory which populate his canvases. They are painted in aboriginal style; blunt, anonymous and with amputated limbs, reduced to the very essence of the human condition, and with none of the attributes of civilized man. Paco Sánchez works with the ancestral nature of men and their



shelters: the houses in which they settled, more a refuge than a home. His aim is to incorporate this into the language of contemporary art.

His creative process is slow; he lets time pass to reflect on what he does, and listens to his paintings grow. The protagonists of his discourse never vary: houses, anthropomorphic figures, trees and mythical animals. Perhaps it is not incidental that his choice of subjects coincides with those of children's paintings. The color of his canvases, however, does change, from black and white to pastel; the contrasts decline and the intensity increases. Likewise with the masses of color and the size of the figures, which remain flat, schematic and two-dimensional. They are more evocative than representative, emphasizing the essence more than the surface, and immersed in the plasticity of the composition. Like all good painters, Paco Sánchez synchronizes technique and language; the discourse and the pictorial effect are one.

His disdain for fashions and trends

makes him and his painting entirely genuine. Both are the result of a specific attitude to life and art, of a human condition which is expressed in a new, unique manner. It is therefore pointless to try to classify his art with adjectives such as neo-primitive and neo-figurative; this clarifies nothing and is misleading as Paco Sánchez fits into no specific category. His art is entirely heterodox; a combination of opposites - brutality and tenderness, tension and calm, abstract and figurative, primitive and contemporary.

His painting is outwardly rustic, ambiguous, evocative of ancestral dances and rhythms. It is criss-crossed by anthropomorphic figures who appear to be celebrating some wild ritual, vibrating in unison with the earth and the self. It is a metaphor of the absurd and of the intensity of life; it can also be seen simply as perfectly placed splashes of color which compose a terrain full of abstract and expressionist memory. Perhaps the artist's intention is to combine both these interpretations: to add the awakening of



Paco Sánchez. *Mahoh*. Acrylic on canvas.
65 x 54 cm. Photo: A. Delgado.



Paco Sánchez. *Nacimiento del Drago*. Acrylic on canvas,
65 x 54 cm. Photo: A. Delgado.

man to the development of contemporary art.

In this exhibition, Paco Sánchez consolidates the conceptual and artistic framework which he has been building over the last decade. The same houses, people and trees. A similar, coherent discourse which does, nonetheless, have a new facet: a greater transparency of expression. All things baroque yearn for clarity; as yet there is no rupture with the previous stage, but there is a turning point in terms of spatial distribution and the use of color which produces new uncertainties. The move towards simplicity does not elude the complexity of existence and of the painter's craft.

His canvases always radiate anomaly and transgression. The characters are incomplete or in the process of formation, with missing arms or legs; abnormal or mutilated beings who, along with the insane, *were considered in ancient cultures to possess extraordinary powers, particularly the powers of prophecy.* Below the surface of his paintings stirs a magical symbolism, where trees represent life, man universal existence, animals primitive nature and instinct, and the façade of the house is the mask or refuge of the personality.

Paco Sánchez's fertile, unripened creativity invites a host of interpretations; it tastes of green bananas and the flames of enthusiasm which *only the mad, the crazy, maniacs and artists can resist over time; sane men must accept the idea that, without a spark of that mysterious fire, life is not worth living.* He shares Gombrowicz's passion for imprisoning the origins and the essence of reality within Form. His art is profoundly simple

but not the slightest bit *naïf* or uncultured; it reflects a personal reality through knowledge of art history. A reality which pairs the ancestral with the contemporary, and values the essential culture of primitive man.

Paco Sánchez rarely appears in public or holds exhibitions. He does not play the game of fame or foolishly seek the limelight as many of his fellow artists do; instead he is content to develop his poetic creativity, to keep making art which is based, very modestly, on great technical ability. The merit of his painting, therefore, shall not be found in the (non-existent) propaganda which it affords him, but rather in the strength of his encounters. Paco Sánchez is one of the few Canary Island painters who has recognized a certain degree of timelessness in aboriginal cultures, which has much to contribute to the current debates of contemporary art. Perhaps in the past he finds that the genuine nature of man is less hidden than in today's sophisticated fin-de-siècle.

His work is a stew of innocence and barbarism, naïveté and passion. Identity signs of ancient man, remains of times gone which the artist rescues and transfers onto his canvases. He thickens this mixture with a tradition of 20th century art with great precedents such as Jean Dubuffet, Joan Miró and A. Penck – artists who, like Paco Sánchez, learned from the great spirit of discovery which children possess, from the wanderings of the mad and the vital energy of primitive peoples. Painters who have managed to incorporate the primordial, irrational forces of mankind into the adventure of contemporary art.

Paco Sánchez is far from the floating artist who sways in the winds of fashion; instead, he is among those who take shelter in their experiences, their history and origins. These he repeats as a way of achieving his freedom and painting his world more faithfully. He knows that creation is more the ramification of cultural patrimony than a leap in the dark.

Authenticity is the flagpole of this art which traverses the past, activates the future and sinks into the earth. With profound simplicity, Paco Sánchez offers us his dense and humble poetic vision: that of a loner who creates symbols and dreams in color. *And our hope is that society will never cease to be mindful of loners. For it is they who mark out those few signs, and paint those colors through which reality can be apprehended, where our vision of the world is changed.* With these words Pierre Descargues concludes his monograph on Hartung: an artist who, like Paco Sánchez, discovered that in order to make effective paintings, one must be both sensual and a little simple in spirit.



Paco Sánchez. *Untitled*. Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. Photo: A. Delgado.