



FETICHER MEETING WITH NAZARIO TWENTY YEARS LATER

I haven't seen you for more than twenty years. The last scene I recall with you is blurred by an opium atmosphere, when you had just returned from Egypt. Our ceiling is a star filled cycle, and Mariscal is also there, doing a sketch in the room next to us. The Calle Comercio of Barcelona rocks with the sound of your Oum Kalthoum L.P. which you brought back from Egypt. A few days before Terenci had also been talking to me about Egypt and the Arabs. It was the time when Ocaña ruled OK in Barcelona, when the underground comic was really going, when we got cool and high in secret, when Francoism was on the blink.

AZ: What caused the change in medium, from the underground comic strip to the gallery?

N: Well, it's a question of leaving limitations behind. I've always been very meticulous in my work and when it comes to reproduction it angers me that people don't appreciate all the work that

goes into every cartoon. The fidelity of the original to the print, is, at best, unsatisfactory. Comic strip, on the other hand, limits you to a square cartoon format with asides that can embellish it but which simultaneously take spontaneity away from the drawing, that ends up like applied paste with text. All these factors led me to do other kinds of works. However it all began with a commission by the Brandy of Jerez, with a campaign where twelve artists took part, among which were Mariscal, Ceesepe, América Sánchez, Peret, using different media, photograph, sculpture. The format was one metre by seventy cm and I did a drawing that pleased me truly and that became part of the travelling exhibition of all our work. Eugenia, the director of the Sen gallery in Madrid saw it and loved it and told me she was willing to let me have the gallery if I did something similar. This encouraged me to follow this path.

AZ: What is remarkable is the

transference, quite the opposite to the North American Pop movement, of significant modern Spanish comic artists, like Mariscal and Ceesepe, from comic to gallery, from the cartoon to wall space, forgetting text.

N: Many painters have used text in different ways. The difference that is set up between comic and painting I have always rejected. A comic strip draughtsman isn't inferior to an oil painter. No way. For me they both have the same artistic value. His value isn't related to his materials. Precisely just this artificial separation was one of the reasons I did this exhibition. There isn't more quality in one of my canvases than in my drawings.

AZ: However, your ideological or thematic compromise seems more aggressive in comic, more streetwise, more in touch with popular culture. In this sense, has your painting added to or diminished the aesthetic ideas that you expressed in comic form?

N: I think I've tried to produce another dimension. Initially I thought I'd just enlarge the cartoons. But that was what Pop had done. I liked the idea, but I chose to obviate this process on that occasion and to contemplate a more intimate approach, still-life and classical style; that doesn't mean I'm not going to return to the street and to street portraiture. I wanted to avoid characters, although Pilar appears in one. A long time ago, Goya was already doing small cartoons in comic strip form. I can't see major differences

between Goya's small drawings and the comic.

AZ: Certainly this work is more intimate, domestic, with many more autobiographical themes, exploring privacy, and although you had already suggested such an atmosphere in your comic your style was determined by a mainstream underground comic form, that made it impossible to see you as a painter. I mean that this apparently new space was already implied in your cartoons, though perhaps we haven't really identified it till you introduce new physical and aesthetic dimensions. Do you see it like this?

N: Usually in comic I've simply painted myself. What Nazario is in the street, in bars, in the public light, in the crowd. When I shut the door and kept out all the street buzz and this demi-monde of bars, atmospheres and types, I stayed at home, and then expressed not who I am but my world. You can tell who I am indirectly through my books, my music and the fetishes we all have at home. Every home is a world. I'm very careful in my comic stories when I draw

somebody's house because I feel that somebody's home really defines who that person is, you get quite a clear picture of who he is from his books, his music, his interior decor and significant details. I've always tried to define my characters in a room through loads of details. A hippy's room isn't the same as a leftie's dig, or a gay or heterosexual pad. I don't try to reflect myself in depth but I do try to lead people to certain

details that can be analyzed and which take one to more personal space. At the anthological exhibition that the Diputación de Huelva organised two years ago you could see the spontaneity that has led me from one format to another, as you can tell from the catalogue.

AZ: Did the street change, or Barcelona? Is that the reason for your isolation? Are all the ideas we defended during the 70's dead and gone?

N: Times have changed. Anarcoma III is a not viable project today. I don't fit into the new atmosphere. I am a tea-taller and I don't go on barstools any more. I have transvestite friends that I see from time to time in the street, but I'm not part of the show, the situation is all different. The groovy bars we visited in the Plaza Real are all closed. The new joints lack that go. Our world has past. Ocaña's Barcelona is gone with the wind, Barcelona still is a very pretty city but our 70's/80's atmosphere is dead.

AZ: Has the AIDS crisis helped to shape this change, the new conservativeness, almost non-ideological that we live in?

N: I think AIDS is something else. The proof is that those amusing bars we visited then where we chatted have gone, yet you find new bars, saunas. All the conditions that then shaped that period of expression have changed. Thus what produced our attitudes then is nonsensical now. May 1968, North American underground culture, Franco dying, Franco dead, the transition, really shook us up, more in Barcelona than in

Madrid. Then everybody found their groove, their place, society was different, because we were older, because the young generation was less repressed than we had been.

As far as our artistic expression goes, somewhat scandalous then, I would find it impossible to do a comic to shock as I did then, because today I wouldn't shock anybody. My brother would be scandalized if my nephew asked him, at fourteen, for one of uncle's old comics, whether it was my Turandot or Ali Baba and the Forty Faggots. Today we have trash TV and our society isn't scandalized by anything.. Perhaps tourists are scandalized when they stroll along the Ramblas and they see children reading the male and female porn sections.

AZ: But our generation helped to perceive drugs, homosexuality, marginality with a different sense.

N: Far more naturally. Not as taboo, but as something real. Before society refused to look at it. We certainly began a discourse against intransigence that is still extant in as far as it can help you to establish equality between homosexuals and heterosexuals, between Marroccans and French, blacks and whites. Our ideas have always fought against the rejection of what is strange, of the other, of marginalism. But we mustn't forget that comics have neither the pretense of changing society nor the means to do it as TV has.

ANTONIO ZAYA