

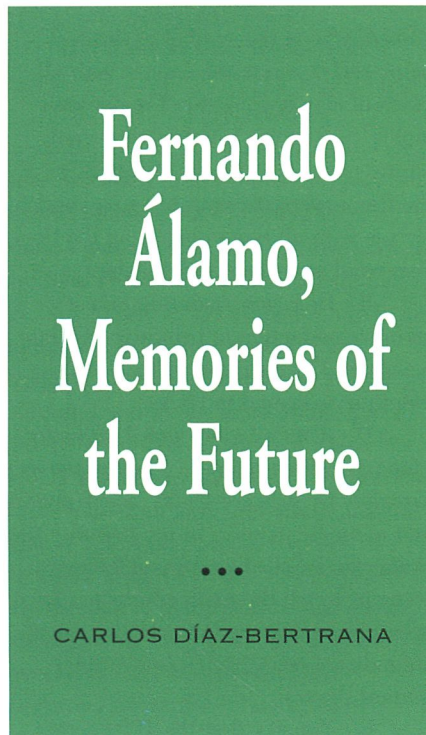
REVIEWS

Fernando Álamo's exhibition at the Andreas Bastian Gallery in Munich establishes a visual dialectic between complexity and distance. The perception of the past, as seen in the work of certain artists, of the Surrealist aesthetics, concludes in recognition of convulsive beauty and the liberty that André Breton would cite as the attributes of a work of art. In images that bring today's uncertainties into line with a renovated tradition and announce the substitution of the concept of linear progress by a pendulum-like ontology that oscillates eternally between the origin and the future, between roots and complexity.

Fernando Álamo's pictorial space reconciles innovation with an assimilated and selective analysis of tradition. He bases his singularity in an open, unfinished system that hastens the tumult of contemporary life and surreal astonishment.

Fernando Álamo's most recent work is that of a traveler in time and in the history of art. Souvenirs of Rousseau, Matisse, Beckmann and Bruce Naumann coexist with the remote craniums of the Guanche, the aborigines who lived in the Canary Islands before the area was annexed by the Spaniards of Castile. Cultural memory and the earthy blast are paired with the impressions and anecdotes that travel yields, in the artist's passage toward the depths of existence. An adventure that sparks dreams, the imagination, a re-evaluation of the past and an investigation of contemporary phenomenology. To which the artist adds his impression and doubts, the human condition and its contradictions, the complexity of existence which simultaneously contains hedonism and necrophilia, sensuality and corrosion, brutality and sophistication.

Henry Rousseau's passion for archaic and foreign things. Pierre



Matisse's chromatic sensuality and visualization of rhythm, Beckmann's expressionist roughness and Bruce Naumann's inference of limits and balance: these are the cards in Fernando Álamo hand during a destination-less voyage that recovers the passion for walking, the pleasure of going here and there. Unselfconscious wanderings that are likened to the flow of mankind's existence and about which the artist provides us with signs and reports: paintings that focus on the strangeness of life, the force of desire, the improbable beauty of flowers and plants and birds, and the terrible features of death as foretold by skulls.

Fernando Álamo adds passion, knowledge and intuition to a pictorial space that is ambivalent. Turbulent at its core and diaphanous in its image, with pictorial density and expressive clarity. It is a realm that collects the freshness of contemporary thought, with its disdain for epic tales and collective illu-

sion. Paintings that vindicate sensorial and culinary pleasure while gently recording existential metaphors. The anguish of the creative act is eschewed; the artist does not reveal his internal struggle but rather its result. He understands the contemporary spectator, who is satisfied with surfaces with that which springs forth, who is unconcerned with profundity, and who must be seduced quickly, at first sight. This is why certain contemporary artists, such as Fernando Álamo, attempt to create clear images. Retinality in painting becomes substantial, and the novelty of the image is less important than its lushness.

In the not-so-distant past what was important was creating new formal schemes. Today, artists are obliged to illuminate private worlds that do not lose their up-to-date complexity and that are revealed with ease and clarity. With a visual idiom that, in order to be considered contemporary, does not need to reject artistic and cultural tradition; to the contrary, it must make them evolve in a new and striking fashion.

Progressing along this path through the forest of time, Fernando Álamo's paintings distance themselves from the Baroque and hermeticism of the past, supplying themselves more and more with irony and subtlety. And without overlooking the ancestral beast that marks mankind's rhythm and the abyss within the mysteries of dreams and poetic unreality. Fernando Álamo's traveling companion who gives him a kind of timeless surrealism that is capable of bringing together a skull and bird on a balancing beam that is also a scale. Fortuitous encounters that can vaguely be transformed into artistic discoveries, as occurs with the wrapping tape that accompanies the drift of the flowers and recovers paintings old *trompe-l'oeil* trick with fine irony. Yet again, this turn-of-

the-century artist uses and demythifies one of traditional painting's resources which, via its decontextualisation, becomes visible. The conceptual subtlety hearkens back to the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, his favorite artist. However, as is usual in these less-than-heroic times, the attempt is less radical and more subtle and humorous.

Central European artists frequently exhibit their works in the Canary Islands. Some, such as Dokoupil and Albert Oehlen, spend extended periods of time among us. What is less frequent is for a Canary Island artist to exhibit in Germany. Fernando Álamo was born and resides in a distant land, geographically African and culturally European, with a barbarian's skin and the soul of civilized man. Islands that are better known as a tourist attraction than as a cultural enclave. A sunny paradise that, however, has not been excluded from the artistic currents of the 20th century. As early as 1935, the Second International Surrealist Exhibition was organized in Tenerife (earlier than in Paris), with works by Ernst, Dalí, Miró, Tanguy, De Chirico, Picasso, Arp... Artists such as Manolo Millares and Óscar Domínguez also sprang from in these craggy cliffs in the Atlantic Ocean. Fernando Álamo extends this tradition.

The Surrealist basis of his painting does not emerge as cultural contamination; to a greater degree he endows it with the coexistence of black sand beaches, of intricate forests of laurisilva, verodes that live on the rooftops, seas of ferns, trees that bleed and which we call "dragos", volcanic landscapes that resemble petrified hallucinations... The Canary Island flora and orography is extravagant and dream-like, but Fernando Álamo does not represent it; it gives his poetics its anomalous essence and its unconscious. He adds them to his wanderings in art history and in time, and to his existential vicissitude.



Spaziergang mit Beckmann, 1997.
Mixed media on canvas. 81 x 60 cm.



Souvenir Rousseau, 1997.
Mixed media on canvas. 146 x 114 cm.

REALISMO

2 DICIEMBRE 1997
1 FEBRERO 1998

De martes a sábado de 10,00 a 21,00 horas
Domingos de 10,00 a 14,00 horas



IVAM CENTRE JULIO GONZALEZ
GENERALITAT VALENCIANA
CONSELLERIA DE CULTURA, EDUCACIÓ I CIÈNCIA



Exposición organizada por el Instituto Valenciano de arte Moderno, IVAM, y coproducida con la Fundación Caja de Madrid y el Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, CAAM

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Y LA

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