

Starting with his canvases from twenty years ago, populated with animals engaged in the most curious occupations, anthropomorphized in their pose rather than form, in the superstructures of behaviour and dress, Herrero allowed us to sense what seemed to be a fairytale approach, which was in reality pataphysical, to the image and its meaning. Those were, on closer inspection, also modified organisms; an imaginary bestiary which on one hand referenced a long tradition of painting and illustration, while on the other – and perhaps most importantly – an approach to nature and the appearances of the world imbued with Surrealist visionary style. It was not so much Cocteau's version of "Beauty and the Beast", and not even Dali's clever scenes, one might think of Ernst's zoomorphic figures, cleansed of the symbolic, totemic aspect, pared back to their origin of metamorphosis in progress. Born out of Dada still, of its non-sense conceived as the only opportunity to interact with the surrounding world, created however using the instruments of painting, to perhaps emphasise, given the times, the fundamental impracticality of his style of making art. Herrero's artistic action was thus built on these foundations, rendered increasingly complex in both the range of tools and figurative pretexts, in the overall appearance of the artwork.

An artwork that has often entered into direct dialogue with the actual space, which has broken out of the two dimensions to tackle the themes of objectivity, the physical experience of things, reaching as far as creating installations with strong visual and emotional impact. The artist's attention remained focused however on the themes dearest to him, first and foremost the relationship between man and the world around him: no longer the animal world, but the world tout court, represented (literally) in its least usual modern day dimension for vision and experience, that is, the natural one.

So, landscapes, atmospheric phenomena, plants, clouds and seas all reflect a desire to face up to a kind of nature conceived as excess, as a place for unfair confrontation with humanity, but starting out once again from a loss. As the artist himself wrote, "Its image becomes an old wanton subject which sinks down resignedly within its own theme". These are unique landscapes, in which barely hidden references to the poetry of the sublime surface, there where fascination with the horrid, of fear seems to flourish over the usual irony; where, upon closer inspection, there is almost a temporal path, deconstructed but not unrecognisable: clouds, lightning, rain, and the final devastation of fields almost laid waste, perhaps indeed because of that storm or some human experiment. In this sense, the presence of extra-pictorial elements within these artworks is understandable: the vases, the hourglass, the bottles function as a sort of counter melody to the drama displayed by the painting. They manifest that combination of poetic spirit and playful spirit, that ability to avoid rhetoric which is a central feature – and true necessity – of Herrero's work. The communicating vases are together perfect form and material, a play on words, vessels of meaning. A constant balancing of opposing, or at least diverse, tensions.

(...) But let's go back to viewing those images not with the intention of recognising something of importance, but simply looking at what is painted there: you will see that the planes are ambiguous, that it is not simple distinguishing what is in the foreground or middle ground, what is covering something and what is being covered. We will realise we are looking at images whose overall vision is always obstructed. We are looking at a series of fragments which never all come together in unity (or whose unity is indeed recomposed in our consciousness, but not in our eyes). The eye is constantly kept in check, seeking an impossible recognisability – who can confirm with certainty what those forms we are viewing are? – right when everything seems clear, everything appears to collapse in an easily understood dialectic between reason and sentiment. It is like the observer is watching the image as it forms, that action of delving into the pictorial matter which the artist himself compares to the engraving technique. From which, certainly not by chance, references to photography can also present, which are more evident in this series than ever before.

(...) The paradoxical question posed is whether these forms are plenum or void, if they are forms that have fallen on the surface by chance – as Arp and Man Ray wanted in their work – or if instead they are the first step of a slow but inexorable conquest of the world by a rationality which opposes disorder, now verging on extinction, represented by nature. Because this seems eventually to be the question that all of Herrero's work raises, sometimes as in this case with extraordinary grace and lightness, sometimes instead with an unsettling gloominess: if and how it might be possible to again tackle certain issues, through painting, relating to

the presence of man on the Earth, and his everyday behaviour. It is clear that the wager is double, because it not only assumes that art still has the desire and ability to reflect not on itself but on the world (even without the modernist expectation of changing it, but also assumes that this may happen via painting, a language that seems destined to succumb – at least in this environment – faced with the effectiveness of the many media now available for creating images. However, it is the very space of freedom compared to reality and its representation that still belongs to painting, its ability to access another dimension compared to the appearances of the world, that has always fascinated Herrero and steered his voyage through the images, and it is this challenge that makes the artificial naturalness of these paintings even more fascinating.