

Vítor Pomar

Spontaneous Fruition

March 18–May 2, 2017

We tried to go round and round the question, but the legend from Pliny the Elder again and again asserted itself, clearly unwilling to exit the stage. So, why not use it as a starting-point for these brief notes on Vítor Pomar's latest solo show? Everything in this set of works puts us in mind of a primordial place, of the beginning of something, of a time we no longer remember but are, however, unable to forget. It is quite unclear, this feeling of recognition, this sort of identification with something that has to do with us, but which we are unable to name.

Let us, then, look at Pliny the Elder's myth. In Book XXXV of his *Natural History* we find a legend according to which a potter's daughter used a source of light to cast the shadow of her lover on the wall, where she inscribed his silhouette. The scene occurs in the night before the portrayed would leave for war. Already suffering for his future absence, she intended to, with her action, preserve the shadow of her beloved and thus keep his soul through the recording of the image of his body. Besides the clear memento intention, this inscription would also act as proof of the presence of the departed in that very room, just moments before he would no longer be seen.

Now, while this brief tale is evocative of the beginnings of painting, and while it finds itself updated on the gallery's walls, the same (or something quite similar) could be said of the other works shown here, for all of them contain that invitation to return to archetypes, be they visual, literary or other. Of course, we could also rummage through Western painting from the second half the 1900s and find there, easily enough, a number of reliable references for the paintings presented here. But we will not do that.

Using a similar approach – in full awareness of how different our respective conditions are – to the one Vítor Pomar employed to bring us these pieces, we will opt to take the hardest, most off-centre and probably least consensual path. So, we propose to read these works in the light of that return we have previously mentioned, in an attempt to hear in them the perennial echoes of a certain heritage.

We recognise them in the elementary lines that vibrate on the surface of these canvases. Apparently, they were scratched – nearly slashed, such is the energy operating here – by lines so simple, that only a previous (to what?), yet unnamed state could produce them; a state close to the beginning, to what is said before anything at all can be said. Colour, which runs alongside form here, also tells us of a close connection to the essential, operating with a simplicity that proves itself absolutely efficient.

We hear them in the painted words that, here and there, show us that a letter-like line tells things that cannot be expressed by those lines that are just lines.

We hear them also when we move to an unclassifiable plane in the relationship between viewer and work, a plane of a strictly personal nature, subject to all the hypothetically fallible additions the viewer may bring to the reading that is being attempted here. Among all the

silhouettes of the artist that people the gallery's space, there is one that supports our analytical attempt: if, while considering the drawing in which the artist is depicted lying down, we look down at its reflection on the floor of the exhibit space – which naturally unites itself to the original, being a copy –, we will be able to imagine some kind of unknown species, a body that is human only through the half that placidly accepts and reveals its close connection with the floor below. Now, as we all know, this lower floor will be, one day, the final abode of each and every one of us. It is so, for the natural laws decree it. The whole is more than just what is visible in this side of things (or on the upper floor, if we prefer to call it that): it is all that is seen + its invisible reverberation.

Vítor Pomar – being more familiar with these transcendental matters – refuses to look away, to contemplate a less dangerous ground: he works a path that is precisely the opposite of the easy way, in close contact with the ground and taking time to contemplate his reflection below that same ground.

He also tells us that “An exhibition is in itself comparable to a single work, whose elements are the exhibited pieces, which must form a whole rich with interconnections, creating a synergy of its own that surpasses the sum of the chosen pieces”.

We agree, and that is why we linger here, listening for the resonances that come out of this exhibition.

Carlos Correia, 2017