

When Margit Rowell faced the megaproject *Qu'est-ce que la sculpture moderne?*¹ at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, she proposed two opposing views to define the essence of sculpture throughout the 20th century in the context of an art that evolved from perception towards conceptualization.

According to her, these two views, which were determined by conceptualization, placed all the variables of modern sculpture in reference to the *cultural ideas* – formal and ideological – and nature's philosophy. Culture would drive the modern sculptor to find inspiration in scientific, technical and philosophical breakthroughs; to rely in the faith in the present, progress and modern civilization's values, in such a manner that nature will allow to favour the myth, the timeless manifestations of the universe, the cyclical phenomenon of cosmos and its biological stages, reinforcing an ontology based in the instinct or inspiration of primitive arts that start with the use of traditional materials².

It is clear that Arturo Alvarez's sculptural work, with an extensive trajectory as a lighting designer, who has worked with different forms of light, would participate in the conceptual dimension linked to *culture*. It is noticeable his immersion in something as natural as the transition or dilution of roles, postmodern poetry which broke the categories that during many years Bruno Munari, amongst others, applied to designers and artists. His successful book *Artist and designer*³ made us believe that a great difference existed between art – with its pure and subjective weight – and design – objective, logical and rational; submissive to *someone* else who demands it. However, after Kassel's VIII Documenta (1987), those thesis became outdated. During the conceptual fusion of dilution of roles, artist and designer become one under a consciousness or art as a whole, which we finally visualize in a common place which is creation.

¹.- Grande Galerie. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, July 3rd through October 13th, 1986.

².-“Avant propos”. *Qu'est-ce que la sculpture moderne?* Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, pp. 11-14

³.-Vid. Fernando Torres Editor. Valencia, 1974

I needed this introduction, not to justify Arturo Álvarez's work, but to place it instead in a needed creational context that starts with the same legitimacy of the work designed by him, since, according to Duchamp, the only frontier between both options is simply the decontextualization, just like it happens in such paradigmatic cases like that of Richard Artschwager, just to mention one amongst hundreds of examples.

As a result of his creative work's nature, Arturo Álvarez's sculpture has a recognizable linguistic identity which evolves from a careful use of light and the conception of figures in a constant process of metamorphosis, which participate, to the eyes of he who writes this, of two of the famous proposals that Italo Calvino had conceived for our millennium: lightness and precision. Immersed, in a dynamic manner, even in its most hieratic series, in a space defined inside and outside of its shapes by a light which the artist considers emotional, its slender shapes seem to flow weightless and take part of that multiple definition of the exact which Calvino found in well-defined design and work, but also in evoking a neat and sound image, natural, stripped of additions. Something which is present in his series of the past five years. All of which assign a main role to the individual in solitude facing the scenery of its own existence: in *Conversas* (2013), the rhythmical and volatile dimension of the undetermined faces or busts projects with a game of light, the spectacular duplicate image in a sequence of shadows which reinforces a feeling of enigma and incorporates, as an essential value, the behavioral space in a way that unsettling subjects hang from space elevating their spirits towards an apparent etherealness sewn by the silence of the evolving sequence of its desire to communicate the impossible.

In formal terms, I would even say conceptual, Álvarez's work isn't too distant from the concerns – with all its variables – of some of the most interesting artists in recent years, such as Christian Boltanski, Daniel Canogar o Jaume Plensa (the parallelism with his work *Invisibles* during the recent exhibit at Palacio de Cristal de Madrid is noticeable), whose poetical figures appear equally defined by light that crosses them and the mutation of time which freezes them as symbolic presences and claims a reconsideration of the body as a relational metonymy between art and life; precisely that which Octavio Paz defined from the present – and the body as omnipresent subject – as presence. Objectives upon which he continues delving in his subsequent series, in which he carries his introspection towards a development of the cited body's metamorphosis, within the limits of a contained humanism, critical, socially structured from uncommunication, alluding to a world that, as receptors, we can interpret in several ways, although with the unavoidable neo-existential and Giacomettic bias of impossible dialogues and unshared solitudes.

This way, without any other reference but my own vision and intuition, I can discern the exquisite series *Encontros* (2014) or *Ágora* (2016), from their hieratic presences or dynamic installations, which elevate their format's scale above their real size, to a universe of questions to which we necessarily respond as overwhelmed spectators. Scale which is reduced in *Imos* (2018), a gesture to a Cycladic classicism, perhaps Totemic, which questions, again, from its most identifying light, ancient culture's traditions which never die, to continue placing the human being in the center of the debate and, in essence, the world that we have been handled.

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