

*EROTICISM(s)*

Miguel Aguirre | Paula Anta | José Manuel Ballester | Javier Garcerá | David Jiménez Belén  
Mazuecos | Eduardo Nave | Elisa Terroba | Daniel Verbis

From June 1 to July 26, 2024

Opening: June 1 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

EROTICISM(s)

"In every erotic encounter, there is an invisible and  
ever-active character: imagination."

-Octavio Paz-

Sexuality is undoubtedly one of the deepest and most shared drives of all beings inhabiting our planet. However, unlike the - perhaps wrongly called - irrational animals, man seems to be the only living being in whom this instinct transcends its natural reproductive purpose to become both a subject and object of desire, a powerful generator of pleasure and enjoyment, and a source of feelings and passions. Thus, the human being is the only living creature that has made it possible for sexual activity to also become erotic activity, marked by a psychological quest independent of the natural goal of reproduction.

This is when sex becomes eroticism, a sophisticated, millennia-old science, more mental than purely physical, open to infinite possibilities that far exceed the limits of the flesh, delving into delicate, wild, plural geographies where, through the feverish mechanisms of fantasy, imagination, and dreams, the body- with its almost innumerable words- can transform into a king and also a slave, god and acolyte, prey and executioner, angel and demon.

For Georges Bataille, as he points out in his seminal work "Eroticism," it is the object of a taboo, which illuminates the forbidden "with a light at once sinister and divine: it illuminates it, in a word, with a religious light."

A sacred aspect that we could equally relate to artistic creation. In this sense, from the first manifestations found in the caves of the Paleolithic to the latest trends in contemporary art, where certain themes like gender and identity take on special prominence, traversing all styles of art and culture history, we see that this drive-passion-emotion has stood as one of the main vectors of artistic creation.

Thus, Eros, deity of a hundred faces and a thousand limbs, rests, emerges, and governs all the works that comprise this exhibition project, let's say it outright, profoundly innovative within the Madrid gallery scene, and which, with its various nuances and perspectives, attempts to bear witness to the countless and sweet battles fought in its name.

And this is undoubtedly the main characteristic that unifies, while also diversifying, these works, created by very different artists, each possessing plural expressive visions and strategies, and in each case singular: the different ways they confront the challenge and rite of giving shape and meaning to the polysemous drive of eroticism. So let's leave all the doors of our senses open. Especially sex. Felt sex.

The works proposed by *José Manuel Ballester* will surely elicit an unexpected yet pleasant surprise. Far- though also close as we will soon see- from his better-known syntax, which gives architectural spaces, both interior and urban, fundamental prominence, they represent a new narrative where the human, or more accurately, what is close to the human, like old female mannequins, become the inhabitants of his photographs, perhaps the future (de)humanized dwellers of a hyper-technological and virtualized world where AI has more presence than VN (Natural Life). Representations charged with high sensual temperature, semi-dressed in artisanal fabrics from various countries, part of his personal collection, captured in his own studio alongside recognizable works, which officiate a kind of three-way erotic game between the viewer- as the ultimate receiver, the space that houses them, and the artist himself.

I am convinced that *Daniel Verbis* is an authentic predator of images, always hungry-thirsty to capture his prey in the almost infinite fishing ground of our contemporary iconographic fauna and flora. Many of his paintings belong to this

plural and polyhedral lineage that he generates by composing preliminary collages created with fascinating detritus from publications and magazines. On other occasions, these compositions become works in themselves. The polyptych he presents, structured in ten differentiated and interrelated spaces, is nourished by a subtle, dynamic, imaginative play of combinations and permutations in which, alongside images taken from sources close to the purely pornographic, he achieves a happy balance of forms, chromatic registers, motifs, and bodies that skillfully dialogue with each other. Power, eloquence, wit, are the words of this game-fire.

I have always felt a special fascination for hotel rooms. Those places, seemingly neutral and impersonal, but undoubtedly harboring so many secrets, so many stories, so many actions and words. Accumulated energy. That is also the locus of expression and communication chosen by *Paula Anta* with her photographs. And, even more so, in this series, which she intentionally calls Journal, she chooses as the concrete focal space the beds. Unmade beds, that still retain the mold of her own body in the sheets, as if it were a kind of diary or logbook, staging on that white topography dreams, nightmares, rests, desires, and multiple stories. The bed, as a battlefield for love or for the passage-weight of life. Solitudes shared by hundreds of beings who have inhabited those soft, fluffy, and welcoming stages of a theater of lights and shadows for a few hours or days.

Who has not imagined, even if just once, that a woman's body was a landscape? The curved rhythm of the lines that shape it. The soft hills of the breasts, crowned by the milky mound of nipples. The valley of sweet lands framed by those hills that pour towards the chest. The plains of a belly that lead, warm and humid, to the unknown wild territory of the pubis. An oasis of eroticism and desires, crossed by caravans of salty sweat drops. The imposing undulations of mountainous hips falling towards the vertigo of the abyss. The moldable roundness of buttocks that emerge proud and powerful like the sacred gift of a geo(logical) god. I am convinced, who could doubt it?, that these thoughts have also guided the creative will of *Miguel Aguirre* when pictorially capturing this sensual coastal landscape.

Painting is also the *modus operandi* with which **Javier Garcerá** translates his personal vision of reality. A reality that inevitably rhymes with sensuality. With the unique support he employs in his paintings, synthetic red silk, he manages to convey rich and diverse tonal registers, a shine that almost seems metallic, close to the specular qualities of aluminum, and luminous modulations that, after the application of acrylic tempera, turn the canvas into a sort of painted goldsmithing. The sensual action of the light reflected in the material acquires almost erotic, voluptuous tones, and turns his works into visual metaphors of a life where the natural dictate of instinct and the unctuousness of the senses end up prevailing over pure reason analysis. I dare say it is a multisensory painting that not only can and should be seen, but also touched, smelled, heard.

The almost infinite and suggestive register of dialogues between black and white, and their no less innumerable nuances: the hundred thousand children of Saint Gray weave a delicate, insinuating, filtered web with **David Jiménez's** photographs. The images he reflects appear to us subtly veiled by a darkness, a burning darkness, for it suggests lights and shapes where apparently we only see shadows and blindness. We manage to recognize fragments of bodies that are enveloped in a tender, subtle shade, but at the same time are enormously eloquent in their penumbra. So many times we are given to feel, imagine, perceive, touch with the tips of our eyes, that which is only slightly revealed! There is much more sensuality, more warm visual options, more attraction and desire in what is barely shown than in what is disclosed too easily.

The monochromatic realm- again, whites, blacks, grays- also presides over the pictorial work of **Belén Mazuecos**. The apparent ambiguity that may be assumed by the presence of beings dressed as panda bears contemplating, with a certain lascivious and voyeuristic aroma, a fragment of a classical statue- Canova's Eros and Psyche- is soon explained when we learn that these creatures symbolize, with large doses of critical irony, the caretakers of a fragile, changing, and complex contemporary art system in which artists are paradoxically the weakest link in this sector. Her intelligent gaze, cast as art and part from within this very system, constitutes an accurate visual diagnosis of the difficult balances and tensions that compose it. The checkered floor of rhombuses also reminds us- those of us who

comb gray hairs on the temples of memory, we know it well- a call to the forbidden, to what must not be seen.

This subtle game of looking and observing anonymously- at least apparently- is also present in the series of photographs presented by *Eduardo Nave*, which will undoubtedly be a surprise concerning his better-known works. A game, in a way, of "stolen glances," in which the represented subject is offered to our contemplation from the disturbing and sensual innocence of unawareness and ignorance of being seen. A theme, on the other hand, well treated throughout the history of art, perhaps especially with the biblical motif of Susanna and the Elders. Here, the artist offers us the observation, pleasant and charged with a soft and modulated eroticism, of a woman's body surrendered to the attractive and enticing rites- also abundantly treated artistically- of an innocent toilette, and at the same time, full of echoes of desire and voluptuousness. Seeing is knowing. Looking is, perhaps, possessing, sharing, creating. "Of the various instruments of man" - Borges tells us- "the most astonishing is the book. The others are extensions of his body [...] But the book is something else: it is an extension of memory and imagination..." This "astonishing instrument" is also the main artistic identity of *Elisa Terroba*, and her essential illusion-obsession is to turn it into an element, material, concept, object, and subject of her plastic work. With all the semantic and symbolic charge that the book holds, beyond its fundamental function as a container of knowledge and memory, she creates works in which it constructs installations, textual cartographies, object poems, polysemous images. For this occasion, she suggests a proposal that brings together books as her fundamental artistic reference, in this case, books marked by an erotic and sexual nature, and at the same time she chooses, as a unifying and containing factor, another element marked by a powerful fetishistic symbolism, full of erotic perfume like fishnet stockings. Thus, container and content ally to offer us a frankly voluptuous and sensual piece.

**Francisco Carpio**