

Chema Cobo born in 1952, has been painting for the last 40 years and has travelled and exhibited worldwide. .

He initially studied linguistics and philosophy at the University of Madrid. After graduating he wanted to make films but, unable to finance them, found himself painting scenes which they would have contained.



Chema Cobo's paintings makes us feel the urge to look twice, to wonder what is happening, to be made to ask what kind of translation is going on between the world and its representation.

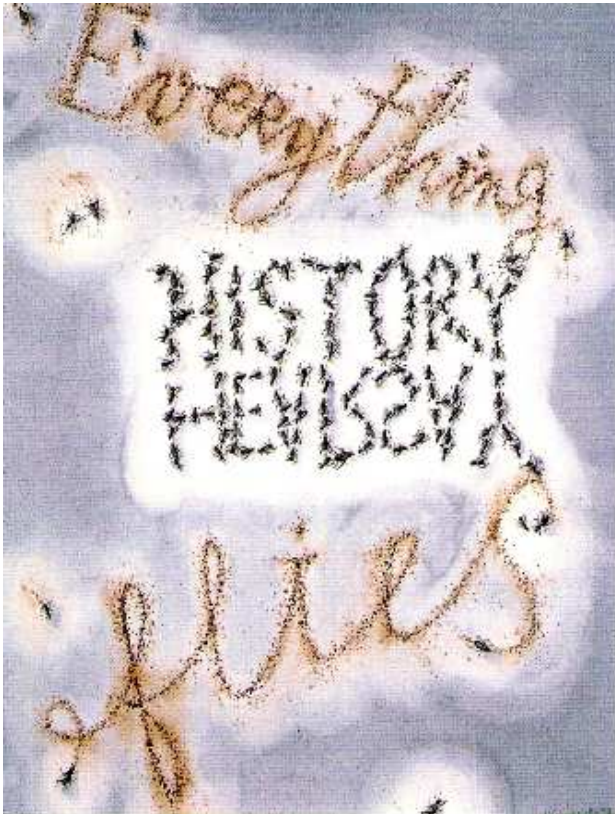
If you look at a single painting you will be drawn in, but find it tricky to work out why. Is this more than a picture of a woman, a room or a swimming pool? Why do we have a nagging feeling that there is more going on?



His early works were complex and symbolic, an eclectic succession of additions, a mixture of Baroque, English pop and the Italian neo-expressionist style all synthesized into a single painting. eg *Smokers* (1980)



During the 80 / 90's Chema continued with this explicit symbolism but started identifying themes that still interest him today Duality, Uncertainty, Chance and Changeability. He introduced images that reflected these themes, the Joker, the Dice, the Chameleon and the Mirror.



Cobo also introduced along with the joker, Text.

These texts feed off his philosophical interest and also his love of poetry, he did not quote directly but “this encounter with words would inspire a painting, and the inserted texts were like a translation of a translation from poetry.

Generally in English, Chema plays verbal and visual elements off against each other eg *Everything Flies* (1992) where the word History reads as Hearsay



or in *Is your Sight..* (1992) the chameleons arranged around like clock figures , in the red, green, yellow and blue colours of the Jokers outfit, combine with the question “ Is your sight a Reflection or an erased Blank?”

Art says Cobo “is a sensuous way to make philosophy”



One of the last of these text paintings – *El Guion* (2004) hints at the changes to be found in his most recent work. “Half of everything is Secret”

“The other Half is Hidden” this ambiguous statement is shown as a white painting with white text, some of which is distorted by an overlaid magnifying glass both emphasizing the message as well as distorting it.

“This work, which is a music score from the mid 1980s, is a sort of battery of energy from which almost 80% of all of my recent work has come from”



The cell (2002) however is a definitive turning point; it contains all the explicit imagery, but has moved them to the edges, leaving a vacuous centre filling up with smoke. He has abandoned text and has created an unusual and highly effective de-centered composition. This work makes a less direct kind of sense than his previous works.



After that things become visually simpler. The subjects are presented in a direct form, the painterly qualities come to the fore and there is more emphasis on light than in colour, which is often muted. “I do not need straight colour. I am into nuances: colour fading makes people open their eyes”. The light, he says “produces a kind of veil of atmosphere between things and that is why the colours fade....”

“All I need now is to free my painting process from all hindrance. To free my work from a lot of distracting colour, from any unnecessary gesture, from anything that’s not needed..... What I am calling for is a dimension of silence that has ceased to exist in the world of art.”

Chema Cobo’s latest works show an artist who is still investigating and pushing ideas through painting, drawing on the uncertainty and instability of our age.

Painting is treated as a conceptual act, symbolism has been withdrawn, there are no set points of reference, they have become so dynamic that

anything symbolic is constantly on the slide, fragments of text may be included, but fragments only, as Chema regards this as the only way to narrate nowadays.



“I get the urge to paint the unpaintable, irreproducible things, like reflections that are so unstable and ungraspable, like the reality that photography claims to reproduce, or the reality that film claims to reproduce, or the reality that we try to reproduce of ourselves”

Chema assumes the complexity of things, his work neither looks for nor gives any answers. It's about asking more questions. If a viewer asks themselves questions, then they will have seen it properly.

The more questions you ask yourself when looking at a particular work, the better you will have seen it.



The jokers, the chameleons and dice no longer physically appear in his work, but they are there, off scene, as in a film sequence where all the characters have disappeared and the camera remains still, focused on a blank wall, occasionally one hears the characters talking in the distance or there is just silence.

He opens up a space full of possibilities, where nothing seems to happen, but the more you look you realize there is change. Light changes, time goes by, you see shadows you haven't seen before, you see the lights that allow you to see these shadows and then a sort of intermediate world takes shape, a situation "between" things that can be seen and things that can't, things that are said and things that aren't, the past and the present.

“Everything has been done all that is left is to go deeper”