

Chema Cobo: India Art Fair's Spanish surprise



Chema Cobo



Chema Cobo Out of the Blue IV

Out of the Blue

Spain's Neilson Gallery will be bringing Chema Cobo's work to the India Art Fair next month. Painting for the last 40 years, Cobo is among Spain's best known artists and his paintings are a part of many private and public collections, including Reina Sophia, the National Contemporary Art Gallery in Madrid. While it were his Figuration works that made him famous, Cobo chose to continue exploring other facets of art, and on display at the fair are the results of his more recent efforts. Read on to know more about the methods of the artist being pegged as an utterly safe investment for buyers of art.

It is not often that an artist leaves the style they are renowned for, to explore other subjects and styles. What made you step away from Figuration and create the works that are being showcased at the India Art Fair?

To jump from style to style as I apparently do, does not happen very often in the art world, but some people do it: for example, two artists whom I admire very much, Picasso or, more recently, David Hockney often changed styles. Since the seventies, when I was a very young artist, I decided that forms are an extension of the content, that forms are around you and you can reach them and use them when they are useful, to express your ideas at that moment. This has allowed me to feel free to concentrate mainly on ideas. This is one explanation.

If I observe myself from a certain distance, and move backward, I discover behind every style and every moment the same energy or breath that inspires the whole. It is always a matter of distance that allows us to see or not see; this is an important issue in all my work and especially in the last years.

It's important to say that earlier I used as inspiration a book, that even today I keep reading, Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland.' I think that still today, among other themes, I organise the basis of my work thinking of how Carroll set out his stories, jumping from fiction to language, etc. to subvert any aspect of conventional reality. It is true I move a lot because I can't stand to do day after day the same thing. I have to paint every day because I enjoy it, so it is much better if, like Alice, I jump from one world to another one, down different rabbit holes.

Tell us about the concept behind 'Out of the Blue'

Actually, when I first thought about this series of paintings, I was trying to find an apparently neutral image to talk about, in terms of painting, the ambiguity of ways of approaching image itself.

As I was telling you about my paintings in general, they are all about the search for a special distance... I wanted to attract the eye of the viewer to a distance where the vision itself enters a kind of crisis: not knowing exactly whether the eye is really inside the pool or in the fiction of the pool, the viewer feels attracted to an unreachable deepness. The image chosen is a fragment that will never be a complete fragment and a totality that will never be a complete totality. It is a piece of something that does not allow you to see it as a fragment; neither does it allow you to see it as a totality.

The image has been chosen at a point where you don't know if you are in front of a painting or in front of a painting that represents something. The viewer is balanced between the option of being in front of a painting that is flat and opaque or finding himself in front of something represented that is transparent, illusory. The image of the pool is cut in a way to invite you to take a position, and when you fall into this temptation and try to go into it, you fail; you think you can get through it, but you crash on the surface of the illusion. The viewer is balancing, unable to decide if he is in front of an illusion or an object. The image provokes the illusion but at the same time it breaks it down. If you look at the picture just a little closer you can just see a detail... the picture is taken in this time-space, moment-place where the image appears to have

left the totality of the object to which it belongs to, and it still is not a fragment of it... this is the ambiguity.

The painting is titled 'Out of the Blue.' It sounds like a miracle, something like a gift that everybody deserves. Everything we look at, if we want to truly see it, we must move around and find a new point of view far away from the one we are used to.

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