

The world's shadow throw. A text of Óscar Alonso Molina for the catalogue Grey Card. Manolo Alés Municipal Gallery. La Línea. 2013

«The fundamental grey, which differentiates the master, expresses them, is the soul of all colour»
Odilon Redon

Albert Einstein said; «Everything should be as simple as it is, but not simpler». This famous quote by Einstein is one of Juan Carlos Bracho's most beloved mottos. He follows dearly with a goal in mind «Less is more». Like Ludwi Mies Van der Rohe, Bracho's applies this maxim to his images, where the scarcity of syntactic elements has been pushed to the core. In that sense, the works of the Cadiz native follow closely 20th century radical movements like the geometry abstractionist or the minimalists whose ideas developed the concept of, What is behind the zero degree of representation?

At the same time Juan Carlos not only deals with such radicalism, he investigates the possibilities of the minimal enunciation, the ability to evoke the desert with practically no elements at all. During the process, those minimal resources form a sort of architecture that rises from each of Bracho's strokes both graphically and visually. Bracho unfurls its trademark simplicity which contrary to what you might expect is not found so easily.

This new series, devoted to the grey chromatic scale, takes the spotlight from its previous work about colour, however, it replicates some elements from it like format, size, techniques and the number of pieces that compose the whole work. It is an excellent example of his capability to arrange everything in a natural, simple and spontaneous way. In the crossroad between black and white, the monochromatic pages shade step by step the the whole spectre of the mix. Surprisingly, it works as a guide, it drives us to the codes and premises present in his former work about colour. Suddenly everything becomes easier to handle and understand in such a simple way.

As we mentioned before, in his previous visual tour Juan Carlos explored the rainbow. Hidden among the study of colour, there were some underlying ideas based on the landscape concept. On the other hand, his latest work, the gradation of grey offers a brief, sober and serene vision of a recurring problem in modernity; the binomial eye-language. When there is nothing to see or tell, the artist suffers a terrible agony, he/she is in the brink of falling down to the void. Just like «grisaille» -the technique that acquired a specific meaning during the Christian Middle Ages- was linked to Lent; a time of meditation and melancholy. Actually, Jesus spent forty days in the desert on his own as a test for his upcoming public service which purposely started on Ash Wednesday.

Ash grey, lead grey, dark grey... The graphite, the only element used in some of Bracho's works is grey. There is a substance in our brains called grey matter. Even grey is present in the Middle Age depictions of Christ during the Final Judgement. How our eyes study, judge that pale, pure shadow in the darkness? By chance a domestic printer located in the artist's house shows the vitality of the image. Hundreds of pieces of paper are being drawn, point by point, line by line. As Rosalind Krauss would describe «It is the modern fetishism of the image», this is linked also to Greenberg's «pictorial surface» concept.

I imagine the printhead as a razor's edge cutting along the eye of a woman, the famous scene in Buñuel's film «Un chien andalou». This means a negation of sight, it can only be entertained with the manual and mechanical mistakes -unexpected and by chance-. They are the result of an imperfect assembly and printing. They tear the veil («aletheia») of what appears to be. The rest acts like a

succession of veils which, like classic paintings cover layer upon layer the spectre of what is visible to make it tangible. The world in which we delight our visual sense looking at bodies, figures, things and our «little sensations». Everything is progressively clouding behind waterfalls of dim fabric, we are destined to be left alone in the kingdom of ideas with a pure language, far from the material feeling of things. We may prefer the shadows thrown over the cave's walls.

Newborn babies, contrary to popular belief, can distinguish more than just grey. In fact, they can do it with colours as well, even though they cannot focus them precisely. Blindness lurks when in presence of a dazzling strong light, the same occurs with its absence in the shadows. Open and close the eyes, to be born and return to be dust, ashes, nothing... The myths describe the dead and spirits that wander between kingdoms as grey. So be it.

Óscar Alonso Molina [Madrid, April 2013]