

Arancha Goyeneche's recent work occupies an intermediate territory between photography and painting and figurative and abstract art. It opens up to a multitude of approaches and interpretations and should be contemplated from at least 3 inescapable points of view: her overlap with her previous development, her quality of process (which at the same time leads to a series of important deviations) and her elaboration of the landscape genre.

Progress by Substitutions

As far as the first of these perspectives is concerned, it is worth indicating that, relatively speaking, in spite of only a few years having passed since the artist started to work, at the end of her university career she was already defining a more personal language. Successive series from the beginning of the last decade retain an unusual coherency during the first creative phase and, looking back, could also seem to follow a premeditated development plan.

The idea of premeditation, which is naturally not possible, would not, however, be completely inconceivable in Arancha Goyeneche since, apart from her undivided attention to her surroundings or her emotional implication in the images which she manipulates, her work responds, above all, to a rational and distanced talent, highly aware of her intentions and her methods. Therefore, some of the basic characteristics of her work were already implanted in the first series which I have had the opportunity to get to know. They were pictures which were made by substituting (take note of the concept of substitution, which unveils her process of advance, even up to today) traditional cloth for plastics fixed to the frame using staples or sellotape. In this first phase she also used fluorescent paint and a *collage* of newspaper cuttings. A little later in 1993, the series entitled *Nueva (New)* "substituted" transparent materials for masking tape used by decorators and at the same time colour appeared more decidedly, something which was practically not allowed.

She therefore consolidated the following in the space of three or four years: the use of industrial materials such as "pictorial" material; working with *collage*, with adhesion, as a privileged form of intervention; the creation of the picture's surface using more or less straight segments and relatively broad "bands" (sellotape, masking tape); the use of fabricated colours... At the same time, from the very first moment, the basic reference was landscape. (obvious for example in the title of the series *Pintando bajo la lluvia* ((*Painting beneath the Rain*)) She expressed the desire to break with the limits of the picture, exceeding them with the different materials used.

In 1995 she discovered vinyl, a highly resistant material used in signs and placards, while continuing to explore the support which is sometimes presented back to front facing the wall. The figurative references of this time disappear the following year with a turn towards abstract art in which the fundamental experiment object are vinyl textures and qualities; opaque or transparent, gloss or matte... Vinyl tapes are so evident in her artistic project that in 1998 when her possibilities begin to run out and it is necessary to look for other components, she resorts to photographs, using the rolls cut into strips or pasted; a process which is therefore similar to her work immediately prior to this. These are the paintings entitled *Paisajes musicales* (*Musical Landscapes*) and already in the year 2000 combining photography and vinyl with *De paso por Nueva York* (*Passing through New York*). It is possible to find a certain echo of the machinist inclination of the avant-garde painters in this work, some of Delaunay's orphism, Picabia's machines and above all, although more fragmented, Léger's least figurative phase with lustrous cylinders.

In 1999, she continues with the process of substitutions with a series which is entitled according to the months of the year. The intermediate step of vinyl photographs opens the door to the introduction of other photographic images, which, with internal logic, find their source in nature. To begin with, we find out of context approaches, especially leaves and wild fruit, in strips so fine that it is hardly possible to recognise them. In the year 2000, these natural images find their independence from the vinyl photographs which now appear in their real substance and step by step they define themselves as fuller landscape fragments. It is, therefore, when we arrive at the works of art of which this exhibition is composed, without

doubt the artist's best, secure with her tools and accurate in the creation of attractive visual links.

Plastic and Iconic Units

Arancha Goyeneche studied art in the Faculty of Fine Arts in Bilbao where she had, amongst others, fellow students such as the artists Ruiz de Infante, Javier Pérez, Jon Mikel Euba or Manu Muniategiandikoetxea. She herself highlighted the importance which was given to investigation, to experiments with one's own resources. As already mentioned, the start of the coherent evolution which has taken her to her current work, already came into evidence in her last year of university. I am making this comment because she defends the fully pictorial character of her work in spite of her continued use of extra-pictorial materials. In this sense, it is opportune to analyse how elements that she uses articulate, elements understood as pictorial units.

In order to do so it seems pertinent to me to interpret her painting via semiotics, the linguistic theory of signs developed by Saussure and Martinet¹ who explored this application of language structure in painting. They established two types of units with which images are created: plastic and iconic. In Arancha Goyeneche's work, the plastic units, (understood to be an independent form, texture or colour which often corresponds to the brushstroke and which are combined to compose a plastic sign) which are difficult to delimit in lots of other painters, are instantly recognisable and individual, immediately attaining the category of a plastic sign. Each vinyl or photograph cutting would be a plastic unit, which allows for a perfectly clean and ordered "reading" of the image. It could even be thought that these works of art are especially suitable for reading due to the accumulation of extremely horizontal elements, interpretable as "lines" or as Javier Hernando suggests, highlighting the musical quality of these works, as the pentagrams of a musical score². Those who study this topic specify the following as categorical examples of units: some basic codified forms (belonging to the group of phonemes), highly segmented colours (chromemes) or industrial textures (texturemes). All of these are apparent, sometimes at the same time, in Goyeneche's fragments.

Furthermore, however, these plastic units correspond (especially in the case of photographic fragments and to a lesser extent in vinyl) to iconic units definable as each of the elements bearing meaning. Although the artist started to use photography as subterfuge to enrich the chromatic options at her disposal whilst working with vinyl, the movement of reality fragments to the picture inevitably bears the identification of a motive and its association with a meaning which pertains to the work of art. The same thing occurs when the picture incorporates a word or a sentence, as in graphism. Regardless of intending to give it an exclusively plastic value, we cannot help associating the meaning of these words with the picture.

Continuing with this parallelism between linguistics and painting, it could be affirmed that the rhetorical figures which appear most clearly in her work are alliteration, (repetition of the same thing or the same phonemes in a sentence) permutation (changing the order) and synecdoche (the designation of a whole using one of its parts or vice versa) Generally speaking, Arancha Goyeneche works with only one image in each work of art from which she takes a horizontal fragment (two at the most) for purely expressive motives as far as chromatism and drawing is concerned. In spite of this not being its main function, this same fragment communicates an idea to us of totality, (synecdoche: a branch bears the idea of trees and forest) repeating itself (alliteration) covering the whole surface of the work frequently alternating its natural and inverted positioning (permutation).

Adhesion

Once the units with which the artist is working are defined, it is worth mentioning how these are integrated into the work of art. As mentioned earlier, *collage* has been the most adequate process for her objectives from the start. Francisco Javier San Martín, when considering the idea of adhesion in her works of art, prefers to refer to coating or even to bandaging before he will to *collage*³. His argument certainly does make sense, but does not

distract from the consideration of Arancha Goyeneche's work in the context of the contemporary tradition of *collage*, starting out from the cubist ideas which have adopted an extremely important role in the introduction of composed and visual complexities in modern art. In the case of her most recent series we could talk of photomontage, as San Martín also does, since, strictly technically speaking, we should not qualify the practice of cutting and pasting of photographic fragments in any other way.

The work process for vinyl, as well as for photographs, is extremely slow and tiring. Moreover, the slowness in the realisation of the work implies a cooling of the "pictorial" gesture which overlaps the real coldness of the materials⁴ being used. As we will see further ahead, although this low expressive temperature remains corrected by the emotional quality and dynamism of the images, it cannot be denied that to "substitute" brushstrokes for these materials results in a distancing effect and a degree of hardness. A type of parallelism, which most surely remains completely out of the artist's mind, could also be contemplated: these basic units could be compared with the pixels in digital images in as much as that when repeated and combined create a whole image. However, perhaps they could be matched up in a more adequate form, although not directly, in Paul Klee's works of art with his divisions of fields of colour where small quadrangular brushstrokes overlap to blend or with those created by using irregularly shaped rectangles of harmonised colour or in the works of art of Maria Helena Vieira da Silva with her compulsive orthogonal sketches.

As for the combining of units, they often appear superimposed one over the other in "layers" which, on the one hand, transmit the traditional technique of varnishing (in fact, the use of translucent vinyl allows the interaction of colours or the graduation of the same tone) and, on the other, create relief. This aspect is of great importance to Arancha Goyeneche, who resists the idea of working with the aid of computer programmes with which she would be able to create effects similar to those which she achieves manually more quickly since this would imply a loss of textures and volumes.

As far as the basic composition of her work is concerned, one is forced to note the absolute predominance of the square format which we could qualify as a fundamentally lineage format since it breaks with the traditional horizontalness for the landscape; the genre which the artist exclusively cultivates and entwines with the most radical suggestions of the avant-garde painters (with Malevich leading the way). For some years now, her works of art are always only one square or one larger one made up of 4 panels which are also always squares. I am not aware of the reasoning behind why she insists on this, however, it probably has something to do with a rational frame of mind, as previously mentioned, with a disposition to organise visual labyrinths which she expresses via an active, gentle flow of fragments.

The multiplied Look over the Landscape

Everything which has been commented upon until now is no more than a formal analysis of work, which, in spite of its coherency, its richness and its semantic value, would not, in my opinion make sense if it were not to express vision and feeling. It is obvious that Arancha Goyeneche's work is structured upon a complex idea of the way of looking. Mariano Navarro has concentrated his thoughts on the task in terms of visualisation, handling concepts of fragmentation, sequences, cutting, chromatic ambiguity and monochromatic⁵ vibration. In conclusion, these resources follow the course of maximising retinal formality. As previously mentioned, the multiplicity of reading levels in the artist's work allows contrasted approaches. As far as I am concerned, I could endorse the affirmation of the importance of the purely visual, I could not, however, separate it from the presence of what he calls "the original look", that means, the look over the landscape which is in the genesis of these works.

On the other hand I would like to highlight some of the characteristics of this personal and transforming look, as well as the high degree of spectator participation in the picture's vision. In the latest of Arancha Goyeneche's series especially, and certainly in that which is currently being exhibited, the vision is, above all, speculative. As I have already said, in spite of the fact that she never manipulates images, (they are developed using a conventional method in a photographic laboratory) we do not find exact inversions of the images. I believe that the mirror and its possibilities for repetition and expansion are very present in this work.

The same motive (always a fragment of landscape) appears in a natural position and repeatedly facing downwards, with a vaguely kaleidoscopic effect. The kaleidoscope, moreover, is basically not any more than a device made up of small mirrors. Perhaps, however, in order to explain these effects it would have to be consistent with the artist's poetry, bearing in mind the reflective quality of water which seem to suggest works such as *Paisaje encontrado. Tres de enero (Landscape Found. Third of January)*, in which we could imagine still and crepuscular waters.

Furthermore, the design vinyl which is more and more sophisticated and overlaps the photographs often converts itself into authentic mirrors in which spectators see their reflection, frequently suffering distortions and, as such, see themselves included in the picture. In fact, there is an abundance of vinyl in these works which produces an effect of convex mirrors so appreciated by Flemish painters (bringing to mind the inscription "Johannes de Eyck fuit hic") making us think that we were there in the heart of nature.

This reflective vinyl has, on the other hand, an important implication in the visual structure of these works of art in as far as they insert another dimension and another depth. In this sense they are related, to a certain extent, to Op Art investigations because they make the look oscillate between both "planes". This relationship, with that fleeting movement, could also be transferred to the structuring of a good number of works by using fine vertical and horizontal lines (vinyl and cut photographs) which can remind us of the work of, for example, Jesús Rafael Soto. Once again, however, the artistic reference overlaps the natural and aquatic reference since many of the Goyeneche's "landscapes" seem to create a styled rain which vertically divides the look. And it is such, that when these divisions are vertical as well as horizontal, the impression given is as if observing the world through cracks which implies the existence of an obstacle to the vision which has to be cleared, creating an almost voyeuristic desire to get a look at them.

And, in order to bring this chapter on look to an end, I must add what has been one of painting's aspirations of all times: the representation (incorporation) of light. In Arancha Goyeneche's works of art this incorporation takes place via the aforementioned reflective capacity of the vinyl, which, by being illuminated, project glimmers which are an essential part of the image. In this way, light is present in a literal and real form on the pictorial surface. Due to being variable, depending on the angle of illumination and the spectator's viewpoint, it creates a dynamism and bringing to life of the picture.

Paisajes encontrados (Landscapes Found)

The series, composed of 24 works of art (5 sets of four and the rest individual) to which all the exhibited works of art belong, are entitled *Paisajes encontrados (Landscapes Found)*. Each one of the pictures has a subheading which is always a date in the months of December and January. They are, therefore, winter scenes, presented as *Bellas Ilusiones (Beautiful Illusions)* according to the exhibition's epigraph. All of these titles convey a high degree of meaning: landscapes found in as far as the artist uses them as *ready-made* images, something previously existing which can be modified or manipulated; dates which can refer to a concrete experience, perhaps that of obtaining the image (the photographs are always taken by her herself) or the carrying out of the work; beautiful illusions in the sense that due to the visual characteristics which I highlighted earlier, the works of art freely link themselves to pictorial illusionism which is basically, and in the best sense of the word, a pretence which makes one suspect a slightly ironical and distanced mood⁶ in the artist.

This distance, however, diminishes, unveiling in her a real feeling for that which is natural. Arancha Goyeneche adores the coasts, the forests and the Cantabrian mountains and she has handled them tirelessly, pouring her experiences into her work. With an affective implication which is first of all shown in the capturing of this landscape fragment capable of revealing itself as a synthesis of the same and, afterwards, in the recreation, via reiteration and combination, not of a place, however, perhaps of a mood or simply a "state". A state of lights and shadows, reflections, menacing elements, varying densities, basic orientations of the lines which draw the landscape.

This latter possibility has gained a great deal of protagonism in these most recent works, a large part of which are dedicated to tree branches. The diagonal and crossed lines which characterise these branches are highlighted in some of the pictures by having the vinyl in parallel to the photographic "drawing". In any case, the central plastic theme is that of how the density of graphic information and material is distributed throughout the surface of the picture. Generally speaking, there are zones in which this "thickens" with the darkest fragments or a great concentration of lines in one or various zones in which the vinyl cuttings also accumulate and the cleanest or emptiest fragments in another or various zones. The concentration of fragments can also be produced according to chromatic criteria in these other works of art which, as opposed to the almost monochromatic and cold views against light, induce the appearance of warmer atmospheres, of twilights, of golden reflections.

In my opinion, this most recent series is, without doubt, the best which she has created up until now and which also indicates a great upward leap in her development. Arancha Goyeneche with her perfect comprehension and her yielding of instruments has not only managed to reach the "classical" phase in her language, but rather the capacity to transmit visual and emotional experience of landscape, condensed in eloquent segments of reality.
