

Santiago Talavera.
By David Barro.

Santiago Talavera's work is an insistent painting that is born out of a minimal argument, decomposing small everyday events until forming a chaotic, absurd and enigmatic surrounding. The fantastic and the critical form a place of conflict, although this is delicate, with some pastel chromatic ranges and a delicate approach befitting an undeniable pictorial virtuosity. Everything in his painting is abysmal and over-saturated. Objects, figures and situations form stories in which accumulation comes together in a nostalgic and unusual present, as if the future was found in the past. Deep down, what is revealed is the post-modern condition of disintegration of referents and the loss of organic time, like in that impossibility of history felt by the characters in Blade Runner. In the case of Santiago Talavera it is an absence that takes on the form of a catastrophe when in works like From the vomitorium, the human disappears and there is only the remains of the shipwrecking. As pointed out by Rafael Doctor, "whether it is a landscape, an interior or an event, everything is told in a same absorbed and contained moment from which, as human beings, we are excluded". In Santiago Talavera's works time is not representable, and the games of scale do not allow us to move within this outsize state, where everything overflows and the spectator has access to the image until entering it, like that scene in which Deckard, in Blade Runner, uses a machine to get into a photograph, making this view a three-dimensional experience. Santiago Talavera has stated his attraction for this idea in which the small may hide the greater proof and actually literally translates this by moving his studio to the New Gallery space for his last exhibition.

Without doubt, one of Santiago Talavera's greatest achievements is that of maintaining a certain distance in relation to landscape. While being a miniaturist, he adds objects and colours until he generates a new, unique, psychological and enigmatic, reflective and absurd atmosphere. The cryptic aspect of his titles, taken from songs or films, also do not lead towards a concrete meaning, albeit doing so by opening up ideas for research. Because it is a matter of imagining, as the artist beforehand thinks of speaking of great things on a small scale. A universe that is seen and is controlled, or, if we follow Baudrillard, a series of fragments of a hologram in which each splinter contains the whole universe. So each thought becomes a fragmented story, although with different words and colours. We are talking of an infinite repetition, about a continued nightmare in which each chapter shows us the whole, with stagings for us to reflect about man, his achievements and disgraces. Like in classic artists like El Bosco, the details reinforce the subject, granting space to different metaphors and possibilities for capturing and presenting the condition and destiny of humanity.

It is a matter of granting poetry to the rest, the catastrophic. Sometimes through drawing and other times through the density of the painting. Santiago Talavera himself says that he enjoys painting as a draughtsman and drawing as a painter. In both cases the process is slow and dull, leading to the paradox that a painting may be a sketch for a drawing and not the contrary. In any case, the clarity of the result and the lack of human figures show the effect of a falsification, detracting from the narrative logics to produce a world in which the idyllic and the tragic call up the accidental, that which is about to suddenly take place but we never see, just like in the strange and disturbing atmospheres shown by David Lynch, a sort of Apocalypse without Apocalypse. Indeed, Santiago Talavera's works take on the same sensation that Claudio Magris describes when passing through Central Europe at The Danube: a possible boisterous future of survivors of some catastrophe.