

Santiago Talavera.
By Rafael Doctor Roncero.

Openings to come.

It is said that in just over a year, towards the end of December 2012, that the world is going to come to an end. We have lived under this messianic threat based on the Mayan calendar, on predictions by visionaries and, most recently, on astrological and astronomical theories that foretell a rare alignment in the coordinates of the position of the sun and the Milky Way. Apart from the traditional media which have sought to exploit this idea of an oncoming catastrophe –not forgetting Hollywood which already presented its own interpretation of the end in a very direct manner–, internet is the breeding ground where multiple interpretations are produced every day about this conspiracy of the elements against our own world. Whereas, what is understood as serious press only echoes matters that have a certain story value, –just yesterday the Spanish newspaper El Mundo spoke of a community who is preparing for the end on a mountain in France– pages and pages online with thousands of followers seem to be fascinated by this definitive idea. So, as we get closer to the moment, every day the number of people attracted to this approaching abyss increases. They are terrified yet fascinated by the beauty of the frenzy of the advent of this apocalyptic end.

The history of humanity reveals several periods in which other similar situations existed. Without a doubt, the most widely studied apocalyptic movements are the different instances of apocalypticism that emerged leading up to the change of the millennium already one thousand and eleven years ago. At that time, in old Europe, several false prophetic visionaries predicted the end causing whole communities to be swept into dramatic situations in many cases. Now we find ourselves before a new chapter whose ending still must be written.

Personally, the work of Santiago Talavera speaks to me about many things associated with this idea of the end. I'm not sure whether the artist is interested in this matter, which is undoubtedly much more exoteric than scientific. I don't know and I didn't dare to ask him. Nevertheless, my interpretation of his work is related to the essence of all that which I consider to be arousing this attraction to the end. Through an impeccable technical language in which he is able to combine different traditional mediums of representation and enrich them with the most contemporary ones, Santiago Talavera is building one of the richest and most peculiar bodies of pictorial works to be found on the Spanish contemporary art scene in recent times. There is a latent idea in all his work that is present in each and every one of his pieces, which I interpret as different chapters from a complete yet open book. Whether a landscape, an interior or an event, it is all told at the same moment, it is all absorbed and contained in the same world from which we, as humans, are excluded. Only the tiny figure of a skier appears in one of the drawings contemplating the horizon from high above, bordering the abyss from a new point of view that he has obtained by reaching the summit, as if the romantic idea of Friedrich were the only alternative to contemplate the world.

In Santiago Talavera's paintings and drawings our world is represented upside down. Reason was not able to sustain all that it built and now it is only capable of showing its utter failure. There is no longer anyone, only the trace left after a perfect catastrophe is able to show us the structures, the ruined intentions, the impossibility of what could have become the paradise that the old rational plans were meant to carry out. No one is left and yet everything is filled with the remains of the shipwreck of our hopes to succeed, abandoned rests which, however, seem to engage in perfect dialogue with a triumphant nature to which we desperately turn, although too late. Thus, the desolation is only an interpretation from the past from which we contemplate this future. The hurricane passed and it was incredibly severe, notwithstanding the grass is growing.

The fact of the matter is that in this metaphorical representation of the world lies and absolute longing for change. If the catastrophe has taken hold of us, it is because we ourselves have poorly built our homes, we have poorly underpinned its foundation and we haven't been able to foresee the tree into whose branch we end up crashing.

Everything is crammed into the representations, but we are no longer present in them. The stadium

is empty and there is no show left apart from that provided by a world that has succumbed to its own detritus. Now it is our absence which inhabits the new order. Without us realising, we build a house that now both belongs to and inhabits the ocean. We dream about living on an island and establishing our vision of order, but all that remains is rubble, abandoned dogs and books that have been left out in the open amongst shrubs and flowers.

And all this, this constant drawing of our attention to the brink of the abyss upon which the artist's world moves, is expressed through the construction of superimposed visual metaphors capable of forming on their own what is always a poetic idea of all that which is narrated in them.

From my window to yours
In this magical meal, in the concealed ceremony
From the hideout of the hidden masters, from the vomitorium
Overwhelmed
On feeling not all there
Where and what I lived for
Look out the window
A pink tsunami, a river of houses without human inhabitants
The world from that side
They shook our branches
Poor souls fallen from grace
The evil done by men outlives them

There is no way out. Messianic or not, change is lurking as an inherent desire of the social being who is aware of being an inhabitant of a world that sooner rather than later will end up succumbing or evolving toward a change of coordinates.

Personally, I must confess that I am exceedingly attracted by everything that is currently happening related to this theme. It's not that I'm longing for a catastrophic end, or that I'm obsessed with waiting to see the outcome; the fascination for this matter speaks to me of a real change of internal values in relation with the world in which we live. We cannot remain indifferent to a feeling which seems to have established itself in the deepest part of our being, and we hope that the threats which hang over us entail a real change that will make a different reality possible.

Now, due to our submission to the economy we find ourselves reading about our own debacle all day long, the figures tell us that there is no turning back, that there is no way out this situation which is the result of our bad planning.

Nobody knows if in just over a year the world will succumb once and for all. I don't believe that this is humanity's wish, nevertheless, people are eager to change the order and build a new project that doesn't turn into the evident ruin that we build day in and day out. The work by Santiago Talavera draws our attention to a society that has already stopped dreaming about spaceships and future ideals, a society which however longs for a change of consciousness that may give meaning to the direction of its own path.

RAFAEL DOCTOR RONCERO
1966, Calzada de Calatrava (Ciudad Real)

A graduate in Art History from Madrid's Universidad Complutense, his career has always been closely linked to the field of contemporary art and cultural management.

En 1993 he was put in charge of programming exhibitions at Canal de Isabel II de la Comunidad de Madrid, where he worked until 1997, before moving on to create and direct the «Espacio Uno» at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. In 2001 he designed the cultural programme at Casa América, and in 2002 he became the director at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, where he remained until the beginning of 2009.

As a curator he has carried out important exhibition projects such as *La noche en blanco* (Madrid, 2009), *Ofelias y Ulises*. *En torno al arte español contemporáneo* (La Biennale di Venezia, 2001), or *Apricots along the street*, with the artist Pipilotti Rist (MNCARS, 2001).

Since founding the magazine *Apartado 14.479* in 1989, his work in the field of publishing has been just as noteworthy: he is the creator of collections such as *Arte sobre papel* (Coydis) and *Tf. Foto* (Tf Editores), or author of books related to photography –of which he is a very conscientious collector– such as *Una historia (otra) de la Fotografía* (Caja Madrid, 2000), *Historias de las Fotografías* (Taller de Arte, 2002), or *FotoRamblas. Boxeadores, luchadores, variedades y otras imágenes de un estudio de Barcelona* (Tf Editores, 2002).