

Discursive variants

MUSAC COLLECTION III

Ruth Gómez combines irony and drama in Works that address the conflicts disguised by contemporary social conventions, and drawn and computer-animated representations in a style as personal as it is consistent with her themes. She is not unnerved by proximity to the visibly banal or by her immersion in what is at once frivolous and pretty. Hers is a game, more often than not perverse, with certain aspects of our behaviour and their embodiment in types and models that are as well defined as they seem to be empty of meaning.

At her most recent exhibition at Oliva Arauna gallery, *Las ilusiones fantásticas* (Fantastic Illusions), a title that refers to both the Theatre of Illusions frequented by Georges Méliès and to one of her own short films, presented a remarkable collection of pink flamingos. Their formal flexibility favoured a rhythmical visual harmony and, perhaps due to the same delight produced in the gaze, provoked some discomfort in contented spectators, who are unable to forget the species is in danger of extinction.

Besides these and other works were a video-animation, bearing the same title as the show, in which a young boy wearing a helmet plays skilfully with a hula-hoop while her shadow, with its clumsy independent movements, allows it to continually drop to the floor before picking it up again. Delicacy, magic, humour devoid of sarcasm and current affairs are the key components of her productions.

The MUSAC collection houses a good number of works by Ruth Gómez, the earliest being *El asesino de su persona* [The Person's Murderer] (2003), *El artista de la vida moderna* [The Artist of Modern Life] (2003-2004), *Te sobrealimentas* [You're Overfeeding Yourself] (2004), *Ruth, Made in MUSAC* (2004) and *Animales de compañía* [Pets] (2005), that were included in her first solo exhibition. Most of the Works are presented as video-animations and as drawings on photographic supports.

The series covers most of the themes dealt with in Gómez's oeuvre. The alienation and stultification required by the work structure, personified by a worker responsible for making the holes in doughnuts (*El asesino de su persona*); the social role of the artista identified with the tightrope-walker's ability to keep his balance on the rope (*El artista de la vida moderna*); the anomalous social consideration of thinness as an inevitable requisite for a woman to be considered beautiful (*Te sobrealimentas*); or the troubles of contemporary social life understood as a jungle in which seemingly normal and peaceful people pretend to fight for survival (*Animales de compañía*). *Ruth, Made in Musac*, also in video format and on photographic supports, marked the completion of her award, the I MUSAC Grant. Featuring the artist herself, it relates her concerns and varying modos during the year's duration of the grant, multiplying her figure to present it in the different situations depicted.

3044, dated 2008, is a video-animation and an installation. The work was commissioned by MUSAC and made on occasion of the International Exposition at Saragossa held that same year and devoted to water and sustainable development, and was exhibited at the Pavilion of Castile and León alongside other works in the museum's Collection. The title is an imaginary date in a distant future in which Ruth Gómez fantasises with the idea of the earth being completely flooded and therefore bereft of all life save for life underwater. What we see, we see through a porthole, a white circular frame that, to quote the artist, 'is like a window the communicates two different ages.'

A young girl who appears to be under the water greets the viewer, her mouth expelling air bubbles (the sound of which evokes that of an aquarium diffuser). In a few barely audible sentences she asks whether there is anyone else in that underwater world, a fish perhaps, going on to reply, both to herself and to the viewer, that there isn't. On a couple of occasions a huge sea butterfly crosses the screen and rises up towards the invisible surface. Virtually nothing, and yet by means of such simple elements and a sequence lasting approximately 45 seconds it creates a convincing story and arouses tender empathy in the viewer.

Although the range of blue shades is dominant and replaces the pink and green variants hitherto characterising her oeuvre, the drawing technique matches those of previous works: a very elementary pattern of lines follows the rules of the moving image and carries out a sequence from which a number of particularly meaningful still images could be extracted.

Since it was first used in this work, the circular format has reappeared in pieces that could be described as especially lyrical and that possess an indispensable touch of scepticism, as exemplified by the series of drawings entitled *¡Alehop!* [Hup!], framed just as *3044*, depicting flower arrangements subjected to a degree of curved distortion, as if they had been made by one of those painting machines at fairgrounds (also used by Damian Hirst) that rotated very very slowly. *Cariño* [Love] (2009) is a set of tondi or circular works of art also provided with the same frames representing calm and gentle idyllic seascapes evoking those of *3044*.

Mariano Navarro, 2010