

MAGIAE NATURALIS

There are eyes that look back into the past, and return loaded with future. And looks that, when scrutinising within, translate what they have apprehended in a display of impossible beings. Such are Felipe's eyes, those of a poet illuminated by the soft fire of a fantasy that ignites the ever solicitous wick of surrealism, of the unforeseen and unexpected. They are eyes of a poet who draws.

With time, Felipe has built up a visual taxonomy which, between hallucination and intellect, seems to reinterpret in artistic key Linneo's immense legacy. A taxonomy requiring the aid of culture, or of the memory of knowledge contained in books, rather than fieldwork. Imagination also feeds on culture and will be the more fertile the more cultured it is.

The catalogue of images exhibited on this occasion, pervaded with explicit biomorphism both lyrical and extravagant, bears the distinct mark of the artist, who has made his imagination a production centre of the most refined natural *caprichos*. And this book of nature purified by the filter of culture, demands intense concentration from the reader. Drawings that require some isolation so as to be savoured, that demand empty spaces between them and silence which carries us from contemplation to meditation or, almost better, to engrossed thought. For Felipe, drawing is a mental attitude, his style is his character. And in his vibratile lines and delightful curves lives a colony of murmurs to the ear, whisperings of secrets and enigmatic revelations in a rather feverish tongue, as if their private grammar had a slight temperature.

This vision of his world gives us special pleasure as it makes us forget our real, disenchanted world, taking us beyond Cartesian evidences. A world which shows us, in short, a way out towards a marvellous nature of unusual beauty. One should read Felipe's images without taking much notice of classical categories of beauty and perversion. They are rather an ornament, and form as a whole one of the most sophisticated ornamentations that we have seen around here. They are, at once, a declaration of principles, a manner of being, and of wishing to be in the world (also within the world of art). And all of this neatly expressed, fairly played or, as the author says, "*sin parabenos*", that is to say, without appendages or additives. Drawings like *accidents* in which the ink performs a dance so rehearsed that it is free, spontaneous

but exact, in which movement seems to generate itself as it is improvised. It is as if Felipe just pulls the thread and the forms of representation arise.

His singular pronas, seductive as a carnal sin, luxuriant with stems, roots, bulbs, stalks, foliar nervations, petals and styles, seeds, floral ears and other turgent and fleshy forms of the vegetable world, is in fact a puppet theatre, as natural and innocent as one could like but at risk of letting itself be deceived by its senses. Puppets like fruitful bodies that hold themselves afloat in the air. Felipe's Book of Plants is anything but innocent and rather civilised than natural. Hence some of his images, through the choice of his combinations, sometimes brush against perversity. Our eye is capable of identifying forms, of seeing them as such separately, of making our mind understand their individuality but what confuses - and at the same time fascinates - us is their bizarre combination. Felipe manages to disorientate our logic in the manner of a Hieronymus Bosch passed through the fine sieve of the Pompeian mural decoration that the discovery of Nero's Domus Aurea in the XVI Century brought to life again in Renaissance Italy. With this inspiration - and perhaps that of a daring engraver such as Grandville, Odilon Redon or the British Beardsley (extremely select company moreover) - Felipe has elaborated with the meticulousity of a mediaeval monk a catalogue of floral images which would enchant the most Sybaritic of surrealistic spirits. On not breaking the forms but only altering their combinatorial logic he has managed to create new harmonies and links that though strange, manage to keep the balances without dispensing with beauty. And in this intricate equation the eye finds its way towards magic.

Representations that go beyond the limits of the well encoded sign and instil themselves as appearances at times disturbing, at times delightful and here or there, perhaps, even obscene. Compositions whose implausible juxtaposition does not allow a correct identification with any existing thing. *Caprichos* that favour freedom from reality, opening the doors of imagination to found new worlds in this our world of known things and which ultimately manage to transfer us to the ever welcome space of seduction. Drawings like spells with open and uninhibited aesthetics, raised above the illusion that there exists an order able to sustain them, albeit in the void of its own enchantment. And paradoxically, free of affectation. A vegetable fantasy that manages to overcome the nature imposed in favour of another, invented and ideal.

Today, as yesterday, Felipe's task as an artist is still to encode fantasy, to consolidate his artifice and make a coherent cosmogony of unforeseen associations, give rise to another world, out of the natural order, constructed through the sophistication of culture. A beautiful and subversive world, perverse and refined, a territory for art.

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*Translated from the original article by Francisco L. González-Camaño.
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