

Ignasi Aballí

Translations

March 23 - May 5 2018

As a starting point for *Translations*, Ignasi Aballí's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, we could take his video *Repaint Miró* (right-hand room) which, projected onto two screens, shows a restorer who is covering completely in white a bronze sculpture by Joan Miró before repainting it in its original colours. This act of total erasure (white sculpture against a white background) before restoring the impact of a work by another artist is both absurd and an apt description of Aballí's *modus operandi*. In part comic, part serious guise, he challenges seeing and appearances. In this video, he invokes art history (Miró, of course, as well as Rauschenberg with his famous *Erased De Kooning*), emphasising its fragility, its codes and its certainties. His video, which could be seen as iconoclastic, opens the way for multiple interpretations.

Erasure is a recurring concept in the artist's work and can be found again in the series *Slides* which shows transparencies affixed to the windows of his studio, which are faded due to prolonged exposure to sunlight. There we see works by Vermeer, Fragonard, Picasso, Miró, Kawara, Burden looking pale and drained of blood. A window is an opening in the wall which enables us to look outside or be seen inside. The window is the very metaphor of painting. By exhibiting art history on a window, Aballí is giving us contemporary still lifes. By duplicating the work of the artists, he reveals the spectacle of time which implacably erases the outlines and the details, leaving only the reliefs of the contrasts, the 'skeleton of the works'.

Disappearance is also a theme in *Transparent Paint* which literally shows the skin of the painting and, through transparency, its bone structure (in the form of the stretcher). In the act of stripping it bare, he presents what makes it stand up to our gaze, as we stand before another person. To paint is to extricate from darkness and reveal. And through transparency, reveal the tenuous film that covers all things.

Another challenge to vanity is with the mirror painted with Tipp-Ex in the left-hand room. Almost entirely covered in this white correcting fluid, Aballí has made sure to reveal the names of the most common colours. The title *Wrong colours* emphasises that reflections can lie, depending on the point of view. The display *66 colours* shows capital letters reproducing the names of 11 colours in 6 languages and different typefaces. These characters made of dark grey metal arranged like Utopian architecture stress the preponderance of the point of view, and encourage reading things the wrong way round to understand them the right way round.

The photos in the series *Filters* show a finger pointing to a word in a dictionary relating to vision or translation. By placing the photos behind coloured Plexiglas (partly CMYK, partly red and green as in 3D glasses), Aballí combines colour and transparency and plays with the phenomena of perception. There is a tautological pirouette when he shows us a finger pointing to the word vision ... The use of language is preponderant in the artist's work but always for the purpose of exploring structures. *Erecting an edifice doesn't interest me. What interests me is to have in front of me, transparent, the foundations of possible edifices.* (Wittgenstein).

Finally, the series *Translation of a Japanese dictionary of colour combination*, which accentuates the title of the exhibition, consists of collages that reconstitute as faithfully as possible the colour combinations organised by Japanese artist and designer Sanzo Wada (1883-1967) Aballí works like a painter with his palette, choosing his colours meticulously among the thousands of monochrome samples cut out over more than 15 years from daily newspapers. By grouping together, calibrating and filing these abstract press cuttings (abstract because they are not figurative but abstract also because they refer to an image of reality which is now unknown to us), Aballí recreates combinations that invite us to compose coloured proposals of reality.

Ignasi Aballí was born in 1958 in Barcelona (Spain), where he lives and works. Aballí received the prestigious Joan Miró Prize in 2015, followed by a solo exhibition of his work at the Fundació Joan Miró in 2016. Aballí has an impressive international exhibition history. Regularly invited to participate to biennials (Venice, Gwangju, Sydney), he was honoured in autumn 2015 in the Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid with a retrospective of the ten last years of his work. A touring exhibition covering the period 1995-2015 was shown at the MACBA of Barcelona (Spain), IKON of Birmingham (GB), ZKM of Karlsruhe (Germany). Recently, his work was shown in solo exhibitions in the Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (Colombia), in Proyecto Paralelo, Mexico City (Mexico) and in Nordenhake (Berlin, Germany).