

THE WHITE DOOR

Francesca Reni

In Hugo Alonso's works there seem to be two opposing realities in eternal negotiation. His paintings are marked by a constant duality that is difficult to define: light and darkness, form and content, black and white, the unknown and the familiar. We are used to finding in them recurring themes in the history of painting such as the landscape, the figure, or the room, but we are also used to doubting their very nature, their pictorial DNA linked to the pigment and its support. So much so that we sometimes doubt the very medium used, and even knowing that it is a “handmade” work (based in fact on countless layers of acrylic on paper or canvas), we tend to unconsciously associate it with photography. This is partly because of the delicacy with which his paintings are executed and the neatness involved in the whole process that leads up to them. It is also because our attempts to detect the “hand” or the “gesture of the artist” are thwarted when confronted with a continuous, smooth, aseptic, uninterrupted pictorial surface.

Despite having become known in the art world mainly for his pictorial work, Hugo Alonso has simultaneously developed a prolific and thorough line of work in the fields of video, film and music —the latter under the alias of Lynda Blair. It is upon these disciplines that his painting draws. Indeed, concepts such as shot, sequence, rhythm or focus, connected to the world of film and sound, could be used to bring us closer to a work that seems to blur the boundaries of the medium itself to explore new visual and narrative forms and expand pictorial possibilities. His exhibition proposals are presented to us as interlinked visual riddles with multiple interpretations, where a strangely familiar time and space seems to have been chosen and arrested with pinpoint accuracy by the artist to then revel in suggestion and make insinuation and semantic instability the cornerstone of his work.

The show's title, “The White Door”, borrows its name from one of the central pieces in the exhibition. In it we see a house with a gabled roof on the edge of the sea. Its visible side shows two entrances. The one on our right, white,

remains ajar, barely a few centimetres from the house's long shadow, moving towards the sea. The other is open, letting us catch a glimpse into an undefined interior. Two doors, the sea, a white house, a shadow.

Are we looking at a film's location whose characters are about to enter the scene? Have there ever been any characters? Have they moved from their original position and inhabit the other paintings that make up the exhibition?

Hugo Alonso acknowledges the strong impact Caravaggio's work had on him during his stay in Rome, when, at the age of twenty-one, he spent his fourth academic year at the Accademia di Belle Arti there. Walking to class while tracing Caravaggio's works in the churches and museums of the area became a daily intimate, sacred ceremony. In addition, he considers the music of Aphex Twin a never-ending source of pleasure and makes no secret of his enthusiasm for Hitchcock's films. Likewise, the cinematic unconscious and the projection of the individual are two of his main interests. In his own words: "Cinema is freedom insofar as it can raise questions in a more or less head-on manner that would otherwise be unacceptable in a society based on necessarily immovable rules. That is why I include its language and resources in my painting".

This thin membrane separating film and painting also proves to be fragile when we are faced with works such as *Two Zips*, a free reformulation or remix in filmic guise of *Evening at Kuerners* (1970) by the US painter Andrew Wyeth. Or in front of *Painter*, a composition similar to a classic still life that, with a touch of irony, reminds us of the vanitas genre and depicts the dressing table—with the typical items of teenage make-up—that Sofia Coppola used to take us into the strange world of her directorial debut's leading women.

As is customary in his deliberately ambiguous and unpredictable shows—an example of this was his recent solo exhibition entitled "UNDONE" in the main hall of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo DA2 in Salamanca—, in "The White Door" Hugo Alonso invites us on a journey that is more mental than physical, where the paintings seem to function as cracks leading towards imprecise places, or mirrors that reflect the inner labyrinth of the viewer who contemplates them.