

Milagros : Contemporary Baroque Devotion

In the work "Milagros", Mauricio Toro Goya dives into the world of popular religiosity with an irreverent glance, which is not only a political point of view, but also an updated reading of Baroque Art that reveals the symbolic load of the devotional images.

In a series of ten ambrotypes made in Chile and Mexico, the author uses as a visual resource "the exvoto", a plastic expression of religious features that acts on one side as an offering to the divinities, thanking for the favours received, and at the same time, it is the photographic witness of the miracles conceded. Inspired on the great masters of the Baroque painting, Toro Goya gives protagonism to color, shining by hand each one of the ambrotypes, and thus individualizing each element put on scene.

The devotional images in the series "Milagros" reach a kind of delirious baroqueism, prevailing in them a tension between the stylistic elements, in which the valuation of the disorder and chaos idea, the preminence of the labyrinthine, the importance of the detail and the overabounding of significant get conjugated among them. The author appeals to parody in order to question the prevailing sociopolitical model in a great part of Latin America. As stated by Severo Sarduy: "To be a baroque today means to threaten, judge and parody the bourgeois economy, based on the stinging administration of the goods, in its very center and foundation: The space of the signs, the language as the symbolic support of society, warrant of its functioning, of its communication. To mispend, to waste, to dilapidate language only for the purpose of pleasure. To subvert the supposed normal order of things."¹

Against all soberness, Mauricio Toro overflows the scenes, adding to narration different elements, with which he makes an act of sincretism in which the dynamics of transferring and cultural reception gets updated. Each photographic manger overflows intertextuality and turns into, as defined by Julia Kristeva, a mosaic of quotations²: in each of them abounds the fragments that are related symbolically among each other, a practice which builds meaning and that provides us of a new approaching to understanding. It is so that in a same scene the thematic reason puts into conflict youth sexuality and pedophilia, under the eaves of King Christ of the Christ worshippers. Or the way in which the borders' conflict links with narcotraffic, prostitution and illegality in the North of Chile.

These votive representations are part of a statement that rejects any official speech and puts under strain the religious devotion concerning Latin American reality: it sees the

constant presence of the supernatural order and its continuing intervention into our most worldly concerns. Mauricio Toro Goya plays the role of an intermediary between divinities (the saints) and the penitents, becoming in this way a minister of faith who documents miracles. An artificial staging that satirizes up to the absurd the social, political and religious problematics of Latin America, a mongrel territory which carries its own contradictions.

¹ SARDUY, S.: "Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco", México – Buenos Aires, 1987, p.209.

¹ KRISTEVA, J.,: *Semiótica 1*, Madrid, 1981 2ª ed.

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