

## Press release

Javier PÉREZ

*Pulsiones - Pulsaciones*

March 23 - May 4, 2019

Opening Saturday, March 23, 3pm - 8pm

Over the years, Javier Pérez's work has taken on a more overtly mystical dimension. This desire to confirm a transcendent reality hidden from common sense is implicit in his previous works and finds a form of culmination in the works presented at the Galerie Papillon.

A terrible feeling immediately appears in front of *Vida latente* (2016), a bronze sculpture in the form of an uprooted tree: death roams, stripping each branch, blackening a cracked bark that has become as hard as stone. Yet, here and there, life reappears, glowing, in the form of hearts at the end of a few branches. The gold splinters that adorn them accentuate the contrast. Dying nature or the emergence of an exuberant life? There is nothing that helps you decide. Should we perceive these hearts as an abundance of gifts to be gathered, or as forbidden fruits which in ancient times condemned the human being to leave paradise forever?

We see this concept again with *Brotos I* (2017). Here the heart becomes a support, a soil, a trunk where olive branches and twigs emerge with bursting buds of leaves just bloomed with golden reflections. Here again the force of life crushes the macabre gravity as if to better indicate the absolute eternity of the cycles as well as this constant dialogue between the outside world of nature and the disturbing strangeness of the human body, between fragility and permanence, between life and death. Let us not forget that the olive tree, immortal tree par excellence in the Mediterranean culture, was Athena's gift to men both as a pledge of eternity but also as a symbol of a renewed dialogue between the visible and the invisible, the spoken and the unspoken.

Everything in Javier Pérez's art would therefore be an interrogation on the ambiguity of forms immersed in a perpetual and fantastic transformation, fluctuating between plant, animal and human. Not so simple. The metaphor between nature and culture that seems to have permeated his work in recent years is only a pretext. These mummified trees are not citations of nature but forms of crystallization of thought opening onto other territories. These are above all those of the human being, but of a human being confronted with what exceeds him, surpasses him, not only in the ordinary life but also in the complexity of an inner reality populated by ghosts, monsters, despair, as well as the chaotic and enchanting pulsations of life. *Nightmares* (2018) strongly confirms this. These surprisingly realistic stone sculptures are like folded, wrinkled, worn pillows. Javier Pérez speaks of them as the traces of his dreams, nightmares and fantasies of the night, all captured when he wakes up. Made in pure Carrara marble, these sculptures forever freeze the wanderings of an unconscious out of control and reaffirm the transgressive dimension of an "another state". The intimate, the inexplicable, the invisible leave their traces in the folds of this form that is at the same time both light and heavy.

*Fuentes de vida* (2016) continues these concepts but in a more transient form. These drawings where hidden organs of our body spring up in places are enhanced with ink, gouache and watercolor. They must be perceived as evidence: that of an artist faced with the arbitrary

nature of matter. To project one's unconscious onto a sheet of paper, to give it a particular form, only works from the moment when the artist integrates the laws of chance. In some places, the ink escapes, takes possession of the paper while drawing the abstract map of a blood network. Showing both the flesh and the spirit requires such games. It's up to the artist to fight against this inertia, to have fun with it and try to keep it under control.

*Manifestaciones* (2017) says the same thing. These inks and acrylics on paper confirm this struggle of the artist confronted with the materiality of reality. Here, his body is subject to a strict, almost obsessive protocol: repeat the same gesture, layer after layer, and see how the paper, the inks, the varnish and brush resist to take on a kind of autonomy. In this series, Javier Pérez draws the color in long parallel lines, always with the same energy, the same weight of the arm and the hand, the same breath and the same mobilization of all the muscles of the body. This rhythm which has been renewed dozens of times has resulted in large areas composed of dozens of layers. But this absolute rigor, not far from asceticism, comes up against the materiality of the real. The paper crinkles, the ink refuses to be distributed regularly. The rhythms of color, the sensations of monochrome iridescent with metallic fragments come from these accidents. As is often the case with this artist, the process of production is a work on time, surpassing oneself within the studio itself suddenly transformed into a space of meditation and concentration. These themes are already implicit in the older set of drawings titled *Reticulae Natura* (2014). It should be seen as a kind of origin and, undoubtedly (along with other works of that period), as one of Javier Pérez's turning points towards these new territories. The anthropomorphic power of the motifs swings between an ornamental almost decorative beauty and the lucid, bitter realization that everything has an end.

Where Javier Pérez proves to be doubly skillful, where he manages, through a subtle shift, to open up other fields of meaning, is in his ability to make tangible the idea that the artist reveals a relationship with the world and thus with us in a new way. Undoubtedly, the mysticism mentioned above comes from there and from the conviction that only the most intense work on oneself can liberate and make palpable this vision of the world. In the end, it is now possible to ask ourselves whether Javier Pérez, beyond his work as an artist, is not also a mystic, a shaman or a simple poet.

Damien Sausset  
March 2019

**Javier Pérez** - Born in 1968 in Bilbao, lives and works in Barcelona.

After studying at the Beaux-Arts of Bilbao and Paris (ENSBA), Javier Pérez represented Spain at the 49<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2001. The Palacio de Cristal of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía was entrusted to him in 2004. In 2007, he was nominated for the first Daniel and Florence Guerlain Foundation Drawing Prize. His work is presented in Spain, France, Switzerland and the United States. In 2018, the Transpalette de Bourges devoted a solo exhibition to him. Javier Pérez's works are notably in the collections of the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, the MACBA, the Guggenheim Bilbao or in institutions such as the FNAC, the FRAC Pays de Loire and Haute Normandie.