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Travel of the figures

Rudi Fuchs

There is a classic and well-known Joan Miró, it seems: the great artist between the heroic generations: Miró was younger than Picasso or Mondrian but older than Pollock. Maybe he missed, because of that singular position in time, the ideological orthodoxy which somewhat characterized some of his older colleagues because their fight against tradition had to be more conscious. So there is a Miró of the wonderful paintings of floating, dancing forms, like butterflies hovering over flowers. It is a seductive Miró, a painter with an inclination towards a brilliantly decorative surface - which certainly comes from the impressive Catalan tradition (mingled with Moorish calligraphic influence) - from mediaeval pottery to the architecture of Gaudí and beyond Miró, in the work of his young friend Antoni Tàpies.

Miró, as an artist, came from the edge of Europe (where Europe touches Africa). He went to Paris, like so many from the periphery felt they had to do, but he did not forget his sources. Thus he became an artist in whose singular work (like in that of another «outsider», Brancusi) several cultural attitudes and traditions crossed and stayed alive - making it a strange work of mixture, of multiple style and inspiration, of conflict too, but never an orthodox work.

In this exhibition we wanted to present *that* Miró; we want to see Miró, even when dead, as a *contemporary* artist (in that sense, the exhibition does not want to celebrate Miró but wants to scrutinize his work; in that sense, the exhibition is of course the precise successor to the one on Fontana, «La cultura dell'occhio», at the Castello di Rivoli, 1986).

Miró's curious position in time, between generations, or his geographical position, from the periphery into the centre, relate to certain contemporary problems of aesthetic displacement and conflict in the Europe of the present. But that is not which strikes me most. Miró is the master of what I would call the «liberating surface»: the surface which does not anchor forms, making them heavy, but lets forms and colours move and circulate.

This type of formal lightness, which yet is seriously controlled, is something certain contemporary artists are looking for - artists from different backgrounds: Francesco Clemente, Walter Dahn or David Salle - but also Jan Dibbets or Mario Merz or Markus Lüpertz or Niele Toroni. Thus Miró is, maybe finally, a great example of surface mastery.

I even believe that the *mobility* of form and colour, as they exist in the work of such «strict» artists as Richard Paul Lohse or Donald Judd, has to do with a memory of the «lightness» of Miró. A major part of the exhibition consists of works on paper - because those works (more than the paintings which have a marvellous sensuousness altogether their own) are extremely conceptual. Thus are precise, crisp, inventive (quick yet brilliantly controlled); they show in more detail what we wanted to show. They can be real as intimate diary or like a manuscript. They should be studied at close range to reveal a richness in manipulation which is as fresh as ever.