

# GALERIA MOISES PEREZ DE ALBENIZ

## JUAN USLÉ

*de desvelos*

From January 20th to March 10th 2018

### **BETWEEN TIME AND RHYTHM**

Figures and absences, memory and oblivion, time and perception in Juan Uslé's latest work.

Looking at Juan Uslé's most recent paintings- all made last year, and *worked on* between New York and Saro (Cantabria), as his pieces typically are- I asked myself before starting to write this essay whether the artist's already long and dense creative expression is more enriching to see through its own internal development- that territory of sign and gesture where it seems like nothing changes when in reality everything finds itself in a perpetual state of mutation-, or through the subtle and no less sophisticated variants that have ruled and sustained the expressive, and certainly linguistic, mobility of Uslé's pictoric discourse since the beginning of his career. Possibly the most interesting thing is (and speaking from the expansive singularity that aspires to encourage many other singularities from one determined idea) looking at these paintings as if they were exercises in a form of rare musical notation that can include the two aforementioned possibilities, in each pictoric gesture seeing horizontal notes with their own durations and frequencies, or chords of solid or vacillating sound (gesture) in the verticality of its presence, or beautiful and unsettling melodic dialectics between time and rhythm. Of course, in the abstract and refined visual semantics that these gestural and sonic signs establish it is also conceivable to see in them- and I would add that in these latest paintings it is done with a more decided affirmation- the voluptuous and at times disquieting sensation of seeing skylights, windows, stained glass, shop window displays, screens, rose windows...

With the passing years I find that the pictoric work of Juan Uslé has become more complex, more resourceful, and that it is as much practical as it is intellectual, of a greater formal simplification. Certainly, I am referring to an idea of simplicity that stems from a great profoundness, insisting on the desire to reduce and consolidate towards depth, and this is what ultimately permits the work to manifest itself in its most brilliant complexity which is also beauty, rare expressivity and the compulsive action of the creative event. Paradoxically, and the work of our artist possesses more *paradoxes* than what we would attribute to his abstract quality and presence, it happens that a greater and more closed impenetrability of what is created is accompanied by the indisputable desire that what is artistically realized needs to measure itself with the *recognizable* content deposited in that same form. The Cantabrian artist's painting, therefore, is dialectical in so far as it *interrogates* (in the most humanistic sense of the term, as a seduction suspended in the desire towards productive expansion) the function of the form as the key, decisive element in the interpretation of the artistic event. It is obvious that I am referring to a way of understanding art, and Juan Uslé's work is a valid example of this, that is capable of *withstanding the gaze* with the noble impudence of seducing or wanting to be seduced; or rather the strategy that gladly assumes the noble violence of an aesthetic sublimation as an allowance to make a possible science of knowledge out of artistic practice. Essentially, a "human" art (in the most organic sense of the word), so human that it gladly accepts the

presence of the serpent in its own paradise, as happens in John Donne's famous sonnet, precisely so that nothing is missing in that superb and beautiful paradise.

Some of the titles and subtitles that the artist has given to the works presented here excite and intrigue me- *I Dreamed That You Revealed (Yarlung Tsangpo), Hybris, Between Winds, In Your Eyes, The Censored Garden, Edfu, Insomnia, Soul, Above Inari, 100 Serpis...*-, as if between themselves they would want to maintain and defend their own natural territories of knowledge, there where some travel in the recognizable figuration of the sweet and savage language of feelings, and others would insist in the pride of the incomprehensible and unrecognizable, or in the no less savage and primitive Adamic language. I would like to believe then that in these canvases, in these grave and serene secular stained glass windows of refined abstract configuration, a subtle interest towards *narrativizing* is present, an almost invisible impulse due to the purified stylization with what is presented, the internal structure of the work, imbuing its natural visuals from a *continuum* of hide and seek where the spectator must work to complete the deductive fantasy that the works offer us. The complex and uncommon allegorical dimension that more than a few of these *windows* hold is manifested as much in a brutal exaltation of the irreconcilable as in the *fold* (expressed like this, *à la Deleuze*) that in a very astute way (I mean: as in artistic astuteness) is resolved in elegant semantic displacements, in refined games of appearance and presence, in flashes of a possible *figuration* that only the spectator can and must complete or formalize. Due to this peculiar and intelligent equilibrium between antagonistic forces, Juan Uslé's recently created pictorial universe detaches from itself to attain an autonomy of meanings, but above all so that the Sign does not devour the Being, making a brazen allusion to a beautiful and intelligent verse by Octavio Paz. And consequently a very effective demonstration of how what is *human* can be treated (those dear *I Dreamed That You Revealed, In Your Eyes* or *Insomnia*, from the titles), and what is real that occupies, without resorting to any writing of easy impressionist recognition, nor even to the falsely flexible games of wanting to use many languages without speaking any of them well. The allegorical horizon of these works by Juan Uslé, the equally abstract and figurative illusion of its real presence, moves agilely and incessantly like the barrel of light that a spotlight projects to illuminate the tiles of a beautiful mosaic.

Luis Francisco Pérez - Madrid, winter 2018

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Juan Uslé (Santander, 1954) works between Saro and New York. Uslé is one of the most important Spanish artists in the national and international art scene. His pictorial and photographic work has been presented in numerous individual exhibitions both in Europe and in the United States. Among his most recent solo and group exhibitions are *La noche se agita*, at Lelong París (2017), *Membrana Porosa* at Cheim & Read Gallery, New York (2016), *Dark Light* at Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany (2014), and *Luz Oscura* at Centro Galego d'Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela (2014). His participation in the IX edition of Documenta Kassel (1992) curated by Jan Hoet and the 51st Venice Biennial (2005), as well as winning the Spanish National Arts Prize in 2002, make Juan Uslé in one of the leading artists of his generation and an essential referent in the international artistic context. His work is part of numerous public and private collections worldwide.