

J.dH. Sala Verónicas is not unknown to you; in 2000 you showed *The Future was Yesterday*. How do you approach this space now? What was important to you when tackling this new project?

A.H. On that occasion I didn't consider using the gallery apart from the walls that had to support the paintings. Even though the space created a wonderful atmosphere, that didn't particularly affect the way the show was set up. This time the architecture is the pivotal factor in the project, but as well as architecture the space has "voices" that come from the inescapable fact of its religious use. The morphology of a church — altar, dome, nave, chapels, etc. — is in itself a spatial strategy which alters our behaviour. When we enter a building of this kind, of whatever denomination and regardless of our own beliefs, we move differently. That also affects the pieces that are going to live in it for a while. Verónicas is a Baroque space reduced to its essence by being painted completely white, and yet this intensifies its character even more. It seems to be asking to be "clothed" again. But that's where the problem begins, because I knew that the space would not accept just any piece unresistingly. And there's also an incredible reverberation of light when you're planning a dramatised work. In the end I think a good marriage has been established between the space and the pieces.

J.dH. The position of the central piece in this intervention, a train, has twisted the axis of the gallery around, subverting the hierarchical order of the architecture. And yet in spite of this the high altar focuses all the poetics of this piece. What were you aiming to achieve with this movement?

A.H. The church already has a transverse axis. You enter it through one of the chapels and the first thing you see is the side chapels, so you have to turn round to face the altar. That turn inspired me to install the piece facing the viewer, on one side of the nave. That's a false frontage, though, because the longest part of the piece runs along the main axis. The thing is that the projection emanating from the head of the train creates a constant switching between the two axes. The space turns like a zoetrope, and this movement is accentuated by the upward projection on the dome. Everything revolves around the viewers, who remain still and don't need to move in order to see the space described, because everything is done for them. This is a building that has been deconsecrated for cultural use, but artists have always intervened in it with a certain reverence, even if this was unconscious, using the altar as the main wall. I think this is the first time the altar has been presented bare; the central focus in this intervention is no longer the divine, but the human.

J.dH. In your paintings light and shade play a particularly prominent role. They are also essential to an understanding of your interventions; there is a dramatic quality in all of it that is very arresting. I would like you to tell me a bit about that.

A.H. I don't consider myself a tragic person; in fact I'm pretty dynamic. And I hate self-pity, but it's true that chiaroscuro is a constant element in my work. There's probably an autobiographical component to it, in the whole texture of my father's forge: the fire, the soot staining the white walls, the incandescent metal, the smoke, the pattern of the pieces of iron collected on the walls, the movement of the shadows cast by the light from the fire, and so on. I find that whole chthonic underworld atmosphere fascinating. Light and shade are the main elements of visual perception; they train the eye, and not just physically. The underworld element also involves playing with the viewer, guessing where the forms are, where they come from, what light produces them or conceals them. It is a process of play that constructs our imaginary. Plato in his cave forces us to decipher the shadow, to play with it in order to understand the world. For me it is almost like being a child, like playing hide-and-seek, surprising and dazzling myself. Children are fascinated by shadows; they use them to learn to live with fear, they conjure it up through them and then conquer it. It is a fascinating aspect of life because no two shadows are the same, just as no two fears or ways of conquering fear are the same.

J.dH. In your most recent projects painting is no longer the only medium, although it is essential to an understanding of your whole artistic career. Now you also include other disciplines such as sculpture, video, photography, lighting, sound space. Is it a change of direction or a decision to show the complete Angel Haro?

A.H. My training was very unorthodox. As well as painting I have had experience of mechanical engineering, graphic design, film and theatre. I think any tool is valid to express yourself. I have great respect for practising a craft, but for me, embarking on new processes and understanding how they work is a great temptation. Perhaps it is reckless of me, but I don't think you should feel embarrassed about using what you need if you think that what you are putting across is "yours". What I mean is that being true to my concerns is more important to me than which tools I use. Painting, to me, is the most complex language, and also the most difficult to fathom, because however hard you think about a picture, only the physical encounter between the work and the viewer produces a real dialogue. Everything else is just going round in circles. But there are places it's difficult to get to with painting, levels of expression where I, at least, need to turn to another kind of language. That doesn't rule out the possibility that I might do a show consisting exclusively of painting, but in this space I think the multidisciplinary character of the project is more effective for creating a dialogue with the viewer. In any case, in this intervention there is a painting in the manner of an altarpiece which plays an important part in appreciating the space.

J.dH. Travel is a complex experience from many points of view. What does it mean to you? Why use a train to evoke it?

A.H. Travel has been one of the great themes in the history of human creativity. I'm not going to reveal anything new; I can only tell it the way I see it. I prefer travelling to arriving because goals usually turn out to be disappointing, but processes are always stimulating. Preparing for a journey is one of the things I find most exciting, as well as preparing for a show or for a meeting with someone you're fond of. Exhibitions are often like that for me; you concentrate on struggling with the materials, the sketches, the notes... everything is frenetic, as if you were drunk the whole time. Then you open, and you're left with a bittersweet taste, like a little post-coital depression. You feel you're more alone than ever, and that in the end you haven't managed to make yourself clear. You hear comments, and even the most flattering ones sound strange, as they were nothing to do with you... But to get back to journeys, there's a moment in all of them when I feel completely fed up, I don't know what I'm doing there and I'm dying to go home. Then the feeling passes and I carry on enjoying the city or the human landscape. But I can't help being overcome sometimes by that mixture of boredom and melancholy. When it happens I shut myself away in a room and don't go out all day. As for the train, I think it's a good symbol because it has multiple meanings. It's a form of transport rich in memories, at least for my generation; I don't know how younger people see it. It's a symbol of human progress, but has also led many places to destruction; in twentieth-century wars it was used as an essential weapon for invading territories. Indeed, the load this *North Star* is carrying is of that kind; it's not a passenger train. It has more to do with night trains transporting suspicious materials round Europe. But I think projecting a continuous tracking shot of an oneiric landscape in front of it tones down that association. It's not a specifically political piece, although it could turn into one; that will depend on the viewer. In actual fact this piece originates from a childhood fantasy related to that play of perception. When I was a small boy my father liked driving at night on long journeys, and I used to spend a lot of time standing in the back looking at the landscape lit up by the headlights amidst the darkness. I liked to imagine that what I was seeing was not a real landscape we were driving through, but that it was actually the headlights that were projecting that landscape, as if it were a moving film. I have always wanted to turn that possibility into reality, and I have constructed it like a poem.

J.dH. *The Odalisque* is presented as a paradigm of seclusion, a possibly mythological being, full of light, trapped behind a triple screen, that of her own body and the double grille through which she contemplates the outside world. What does that duality contribute?

A.H. This piece is presented in the lower choir of the church, which gives me the opportunity to emphasise its air of constrained voluptuousness, a common situation in that space, I imagine. By being located close to the lighting it could recall a Virgin or a Christ Pantocrator. Through the grille *the Odalisque* sees life, fantasy, dreams pass by, but there is also a moment when the images emanating from the train break through that dense grille and bring air inside. That cacophony of grilles is very evocative; the exceptional dialogue created between the two pieces was only possible thanks to this remarkable space. I think that's what gives the exhibition its Baroque character, the dialogue of the pieces with each other.

J.dH. How do you think the viewer relates to that atmosphere?

A.H. Obviously that will depend on each individual. I think the atmosphere created through the combination of the architecture, the works and the sound space invites you to sit down, to take a break, in keeping with the original function of the building. To be able to think about your personal issues away from the noise of the outside world is a worthy aim in itself for this kind of intervention, and if the viewer manages to find some point of contact with the pieces, so much the better. It's curious, because opposite the door of the gallery is one of the entrances to the market, and people come in with their shopping bags, sit down for a while and look. I like that spontaneity, which leaves the liturgy of contemporary art spaces behind.

J.dH. Any new projects on the go?

A.H. For the moment, tidying up my studio, which is in a right old mess. I want to take stock a little after a hectic year and get down to painting a good series. I'm already looking forward to smelling of turps.