

MAISTERRAVALBUENA

ANTONIO BALLESTER MORENO - BENJAMÍN PALENCIA

THYME AND GRASS ON THE CEILING OF MY ROOM

SEPTEMBER 13 - OCTOBER 27, 2018

This project took shape from the exhibition “Vivan los campos libres de España” by Antonio Ballester Moreno held in La Casa Encendida in 2017. The title referred to an episode in which Alberto Sánchez cried out loud “Long live the free fields of Spain!”, probably in one of those initiation walks he used to take together with Benjamín Palencia to Cerro Testigo.

In the beginning of the 30's, that sentence became a real statement of intents for a forming Avant-garde that defended the arid Castilian landscapes as an experimentation space, without leaving behind the new languages arisen in Paris. Specifically, Benjamín Palencia used Surrealism as a tool to translate into the language of painting the inner life of any stone, stream or bramble he may come across with along the pathways of Madrid.

With this exhibition, Ballester Moreno somehow wanted to highlight the value of that Spanish Avant-garde that gave rise to La Escuela de Vallecas, and as an artist bound to that school, he felt he was the heir of that legacy, searching for the simple to transcend.

As well as Palencia, Ballester Moreno used the figure-like display of pictograms (a triangle shall represent a mountain; a circle, the Sun or the Moon; two colored areas, the horizon; etc.) as formal elements that adapt to the already independent reality of canvas.

“Thyme and grass on the ceiling of my room”, the title of this exhibition, is a sentence taken from a text written by Benjamín Palencia in 1932, in which he defended a performance based in what is immediate and on the trodden track, but approached through a look that challenges and puts upside down the logic of what has already been learnt. Under this “unlearning” view as a way to stimulate the creative action, Ballester Moreno sets up an exhibition display where visitors are invited to question themselves about the conventions of looking.

As a collaboration project, this exhibition is simultaneously displayed both in the Leandro Navarro gallery and in Maisterravalbuena. Thus, not only an intergenerational dialog between Palencia's and Ballester Moreno's works takes place, but also between one gallery specialized in modern art, specifically the Spanish Avant-garde, such as Leandro Navarro, and one focusing in currently active artists, such as Maisterravalbuena. This is the first time that two galleries set up such an atypical project in Madrid, defending the cross-cut of art and its contexts, and the urgency of looking at the past with a critical and transforming memory that goes beyond hermetic and pre-established limits.

Adding to that, the exhibitions in the two galleries in Madrid coincide with the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, to which Antonio Ballester Moreno has been invited to participate as an artist and co-curator of the exhibition. As a curator, Ballester Moreno has picked up the work of Benjamín Palencia, among other artists', and has linked it with a setup of paintings made for this event. The dialog arisen between his works and the pavilion's environment in the Bienal de São Paulo, together with the two exhibitions held in Madrid, definitely adds up to the new look cast on our artistic past and its link with our present.