

Mario Palacios

Art with Its Very Own Tempo

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Photos courtesy of Mario Palacios

Map, 120 x 120 cm, 1997 (oil on canvas).



Theorem, a Place of Fire, 70 x 50 cm, 1996 (oil on canvas).

Mario Palacios, born in 1953, surprised the Mexican art world with his work *Theorem* (1999), a series of 84 serigraphs and three drawings, his re-connection with a centered pictorial universe. The work is based on a pictorial order of

things practically without precedent in Mexico: perhaps only the painting of Vicente Rojo hints at this kind of fervor for ordering. This experimentation, in effect, presupposes a *contretemps*, in the sense that the myth operates when it critiques the overflow of history in a given present.

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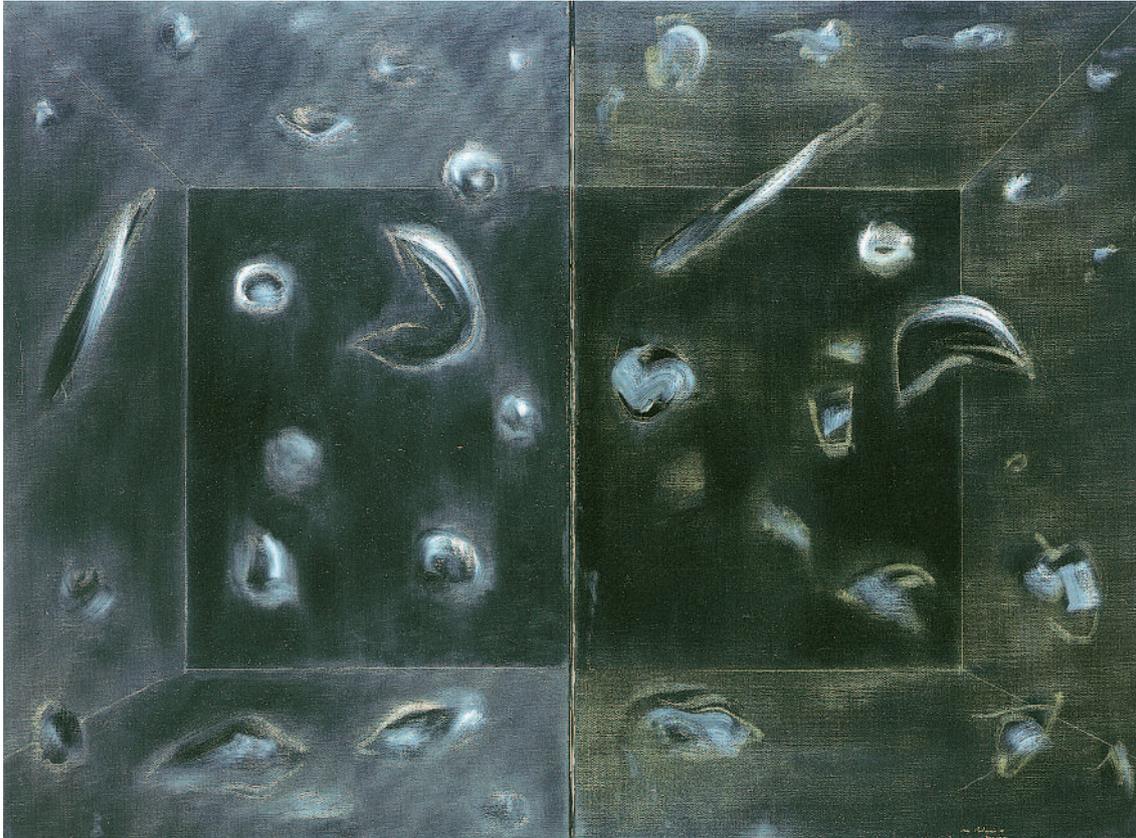
The *contretemps* happens when a work presents itself in a context in which



Theorem, 70 x 50 cm, 1992 (oil on canvas).

most works of art try to imitate facts and situations. Thus, a state of formal decadence would correspond to a state of social decadence; a devaluing of the aesthetic form would correspond, as a result, to a loss of human values, given that the former should emerge in accordance with the historic moment. For Palacios, in contrast, the work of art

continues to have its very own tempo. The work is not a reflection; that is to say, social time does not act through it, contaminating it as a form, but places itself before reality like a mirror in which the viewer, whose gaze originates in reality, can find an alternative in the form and accede to an order different from the free play of appearances.



Suspended Dinner, diptych, 90 x 120 cm, 1989 (oil on canvas).

Order, center, delimitation of the line, clarity in the process of construction. This last word, “construction,” is just right for Palacios’ efforts. His search presupposes the question, “How does one build in a universe whose most evident symptom is deconstruction, not only in social terms and human values, but also with regard to the meaning of art?”

Palacios’ answer is rigorous: the inherited symbolic universe does not depend on the zigzags of history. The archetypes underlying the symbols remain intact, outside the game of cultural becoming. Palacios builds a graphic work in which form recalls ancient presences, like the icon, but they are naked presences in which the aspiration to an order of things, repeated as



Nature Reserve, 70 x 90 cm, 1991 (oil on canvas).

the central figure of his serigraphs, makes itself felt as pure form. It could be no other way without making a parody of the demand to link up again with sacred levels. Palacios builds a pre-figurative environment in which the rigorousness of form deprived of any attribute that is not its presence becomes the icon of a formless divinity. Palacios' art has a necessity of origin

which would explain the obsession in his serigraphs for repeating rectangles whose centering in the work indicates that there is no up or down, that the notion of origin to which it aspires invalidates any exercise of power. The idea of origin regulated by a conceptual management is not demanded. We are dealing here with a notion of origin that appeals to the viewer's individual



Three Questions to a Landscape, 55 x 37.5 cm each, 1990 (serigraphy on paper).

centering to give him/her back the consciousness of his/her lost symbolic being.

After seeing a work like *Theorem*, the question would be if Palacios' work has continuity. What comes after the clear presentation of a quest whose motives show the imperious necessity of linking up again with a symbolic layer lacking in modern Man?

What comes after a series of variations around an obsessive center that becomes a presence via pure form? This is hard to answer.

For the time being, we are left with a certainty: Palacios' graphic work leaves behind it a rigor uncommon in Mexican visual arts. ■■■