

The Concentration of Line

Notes on the Work of Sabrina Villaseñor

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Photos courtesy of Sabrina Villaseñor

Dalliance Triptych, Erotic Games, 120 x 100 cm (mixed technique).



Integration, polych, 153 x 40 cm (mixed techniques).

Sabrina Villaseñor paints bodies. This should be taken literally: she paints bodies, not human beings. Her work displays no faces or gestures. It defines muscles, torsos, backs, genitals. Sabrina Villaseñor makes works of art that seek an almost inhuman warmth.

THE STRENGTH OF DRAWING

I know very little about this artist and some of what I know may only serve to muddy the way to the secret of her canvases. She studied design at the Iberoamerican University and did further studies at the Elisava School of Graphic and Industrial Design in Barcelona. Surely her concern with design was already the root of that decision.

We could think that her professional education made it possible to define the precise nature of her art: the severity of her stroke and the definition of her lines. It would be hard to find an unnecessary line on her canvases, and I think that this economy is also a profound way of expressing reality. If I am not mistaken, Sabrina Villaseñor is interested in more than beauty or, to say it differently, she is interested exclusively in the beauty of reality.

She immersed herself in the visual arts at the Fine Arts Academy's Surikov Institute in the former Soviet Union for two years. I imagine her in that far-off city, observing new colors and forms strictly from the point of view of a sketch artist: a mix of abstraction, geometry and love of form. Like with everyone else, mastering this technique opened up other tools for her. Among her later teachers —Georgeanne González, Philip Bragar, Gilverto Aceves Navarro, Luis Argudín and José Luis Cuevas— are notable sketch artists. That is not a chance occurrence if we look at the results.

That experience was so intense that she has not wanted to put down her pencil. And of

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Deliberation, 70 x 80 cm (pastels and collage).

course, there is no reason she should. She uses water colors, oils, pastels, Indian ink, and she does it with knowledge and talent. Basically, though, she draws. This should not be taken as a stage in a broader evolution, as though looking at her work showed up technical limitations. We are dealing here with a musician who prefers quartets to symphonies, who has opted for concentration and reflection instead of a breadth that takes in everything.

This explains why her work is so essential, from all points of view. I am not familiar with Sabrina Villaseñor's life story, but it would be easy to imagine that one day, without any warning, she looked at a human body and felt the vertigo of understanding it as a thing, an unjustified and unjustifiable object, although with a

difficult-to-understand dignity, at the same time both fragile and forceful.

It does not matter if I am wrong and things happened a different way. This amazement consisting of guessing what is human from a truly elemental perspective is rendered in her work: a thing among things, before the gesture, the word and any form of communication (except, perhaps, the erotic). How bewildering! From the violence of that surprise, this woman has created an interesting, profound, monothematic work.

The strength of her stroke and the power of her line have been placed at the service of isolating and repeating the human figure in a strictly physical sense. ■■■