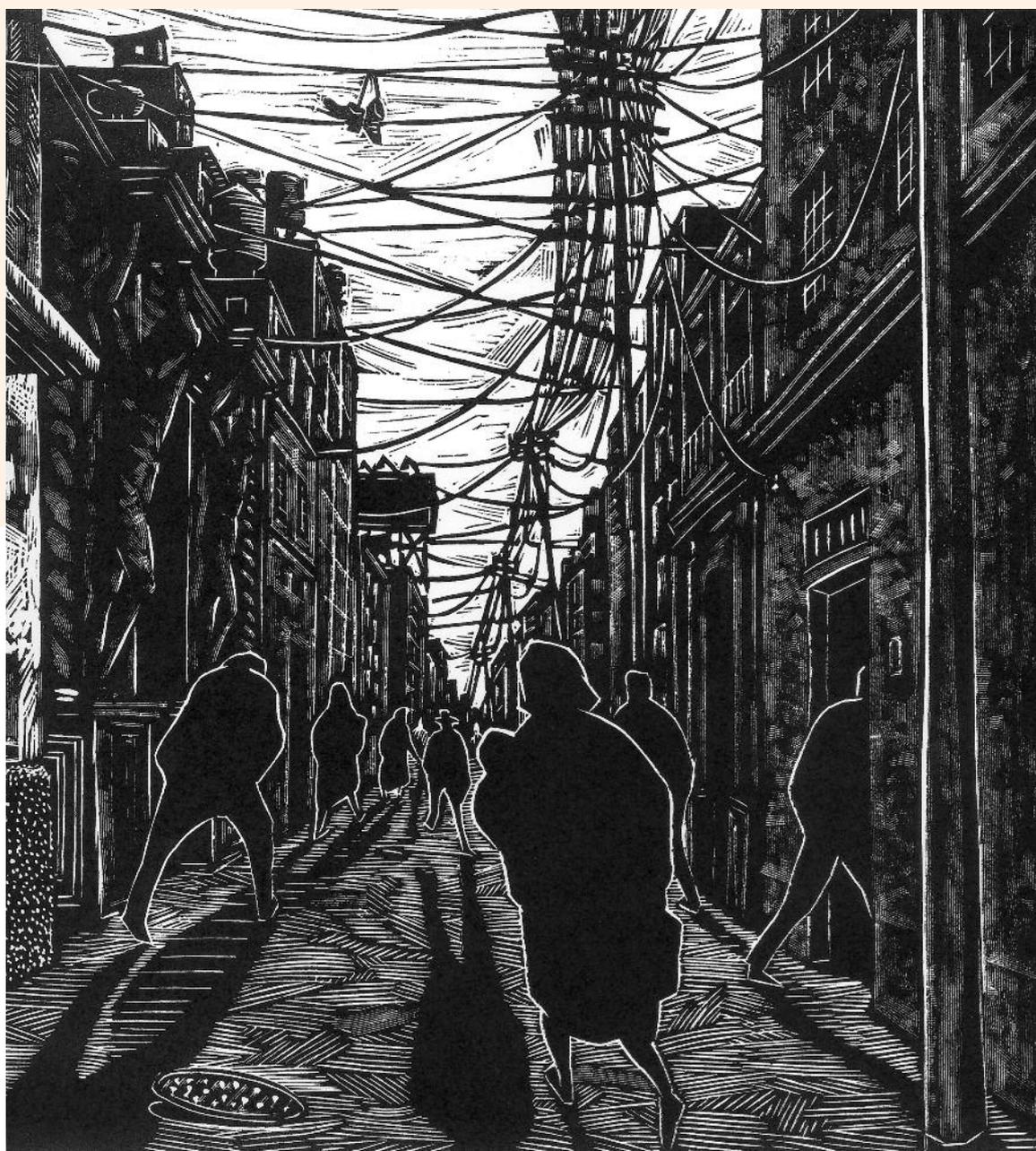


Pilgrimage and Citizenship Of an Artistic Craft

The Work of Mauricio Gómez Morin

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*



▲ *Morning Sunsets*, 23 x 23 cm, 2000 (linoleum print).

*Fortune comes to the aid
of the audacious.*

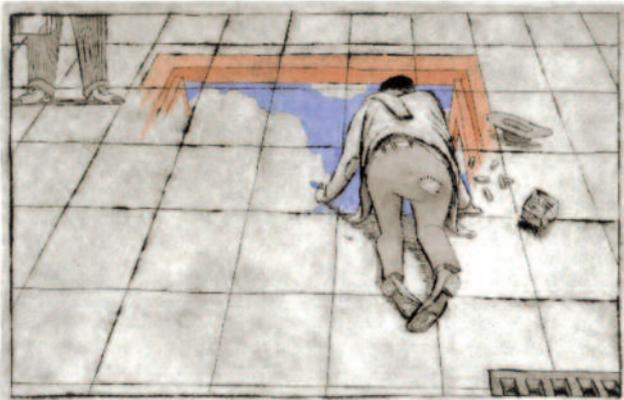
VIRGIL

Mauricio Gómez Morin Fuentes identifies completely with this maxim of Virgil's. At mysterious, shaman-like depths, Mauricio might not imagine that his audacity has consisted of keeping up a productive vein through torturous years, a vein that has never betrayed the best of his fertile imagination. His work installs itself in the present, impassive before the fickle passage of time: it is like the resonance of the tenacious constancy of the pilgrim who refuses to stop being the citizen of his craft. Gómez Morin Fuentes journeys and inhabits his work with the vocation of the light-

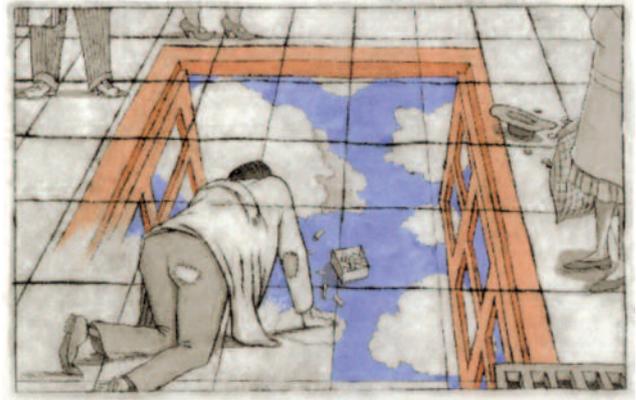
house keeper and is thus discovered, illuminated, in secret complicity and little dissimulated delight with the memory of his primal ghosts who never give up in their attempts to provoke his both irreverent and fine stroke on his mental canvas and in the next dream, during the gradual course of his work. I know some of those ghosts and I also know about their weighty truths. They are inhabitants of a land in which the artist has lived and dedicated his leisure and, when necessary—which is almost always—has made them strokes of accumulated memory.

In this exercise, Mauricio is faithful to Cennetti's maxim, "There is something so vile about good sense that one would prefer to be wise as

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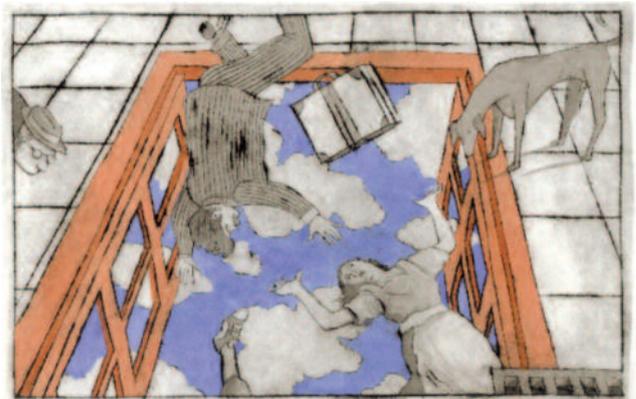
History of Painters, Moment 1, 16 x 25 cm, 2000 (dry point and watercolor).



History of Painters, Moment 2, 16 x 25 cm, 2000 (dry point and watercolor).



History of Painters, Moment 3, 16 x 25 cm, 2000 (dry point and watercolor).



History of Painters, Moment 4, 16 x 25 cm, 2000 (dry point and watercolor).

a madman.” Gómez Morin Fuentes commits the fortunate error of not knowing his creative limits, and thus, he has no good sense: he insatiably explores —like a madman— the inhabitable spaces within his reach, in his movement as a painter. Landscape, mural, still life, portrait, etching in wood and zinc, silk screen, illustration: all these have been the byways of his work and the reasons behind his commitment to the multidimensional rootedness that both work and artist achieve in the very milieu that Saint Augustine once termed “the bazaar of loquacity,” meaning life.

Accepting Mauricio’s proposal to present his painting on this occasion is on my part both daring and an opportunity to partially pay homage to him, from the ignorance that is at the same time the shared ambition of discovering what is hidden behind what is real. It is also an act of elemental justice and a celebration of the aesthetic pleasure in which his work increasingly immerses me.

I met Mauricio 25 years ago in the city of Chihuahua one northern summer afternoon when we were both maturing adolescents; he was wearing a cap and black leather gloves and he briskly rubbed his hands together to my summery surprise. Now my understanding is that it was his nerves at discovering himself in the land of Don Manuel, his grandfather, exploring for the first time the lights and shadows of the desert. However, I also discovered at that meeting that “pachucos” did not live only in the United States; their tradition, and undoubtedly their roots, also belong to Mexico’s highland, and sometimes they become the conquerors of their own provinces. Since that day and after certain twists and turns of the logistics of friendship that have overcome geography and elastic frontiers, we have been inhabitants of a time that we do not recognize either as being distinctive of a generation or as meaning a finite nearness; it is only a revisited loneliness that becomes a perennially vital celebration since, in the reoccupation of the friendly rest stops that have held so much creative dialogue, we have achieved



▲ *The Chameleon's Morality*, 200 x 90 cm, 1990 (wood engraving).

the conquest of that inclusive plenitude that is “loving your friend more than understanding him.” I do not know if these words are for the painter, the friend, the poet or the brother. I think that I wrote them for all four, with the aim of discovering the reasons of the heart that reason does not know. In any case, I am consoled by Mauricio’s legendary conviction about the historicalness of the repeated image as an essential component (because of their potential diversity) of that universe of fractions that are the aesthetic times and spaces that form part of his work, or his artistic pilgrimage.

Thus, it occurs to me that Mauricio’s early eccentricity in the land of his grandparents announced what I understood as new forms of occupying the intimate provinces of the pictori-

human actor; in this exercise, Mauricio manages to conquer in his work the vast territories of what Paz called “the reality of the senses.” His intimate relationship with pictorial work is also an encounter with a wandering vocation for the search for promises and new paths of expression.

And yet, I think that Gómez Morin Fuentes does not always think of himself as isolated in painting. Due to didactic conviction and unconditional giving of himself to a complex universe which just as it affirms him, also denies him without desiring to, he tries insistently to discover what is not himself: his artistic tread is sometimes orphaned, though constant, and is also the step of the caustic interpreter of what is real that overwhelms him. The artist’s work is above all a

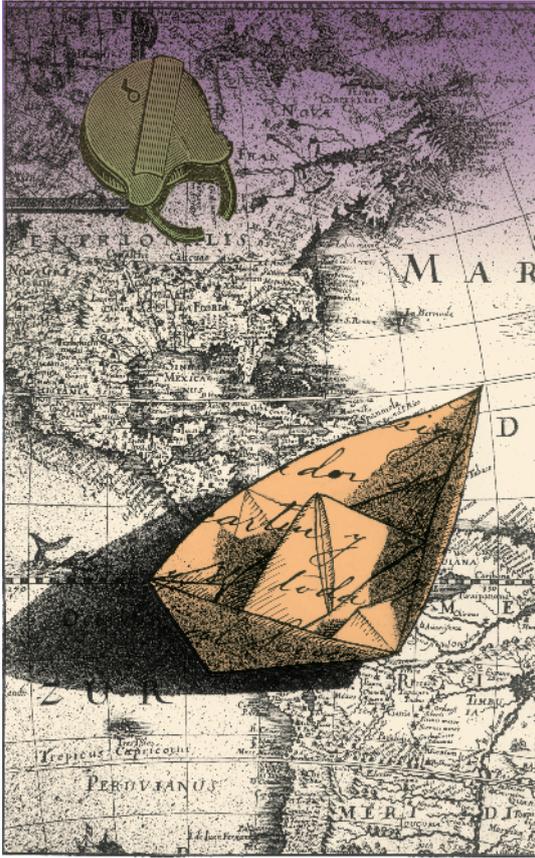
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His painting surprises from the unpredictable and becomes
an atmosphere for laughter and weeping.

al image. From then on, the painter has characterized himself as a modern iconoclast of the origin. That may be the origin of his first paintings in which the meditation about intimacy, the insistence on rootedness, inhabit each of his themes: birds, minotaurs, old men, children, flying *bolillo* rolls, bicycles, orphaned hearts, bus stops, oceans, somber though illuminating clothes lines, anonymous feet and corn, the plant of the Americas, one of his favorite themes. In a vast and suspicious instant, from all these entities emerge not unleashed islands or turned-in-on-itself rhetoric, but rather melancholic wholes, rich in odors, color and form, that are translated into specific abstractions of the unrepeatable time of the image and original, innovative aesthetic proposals.

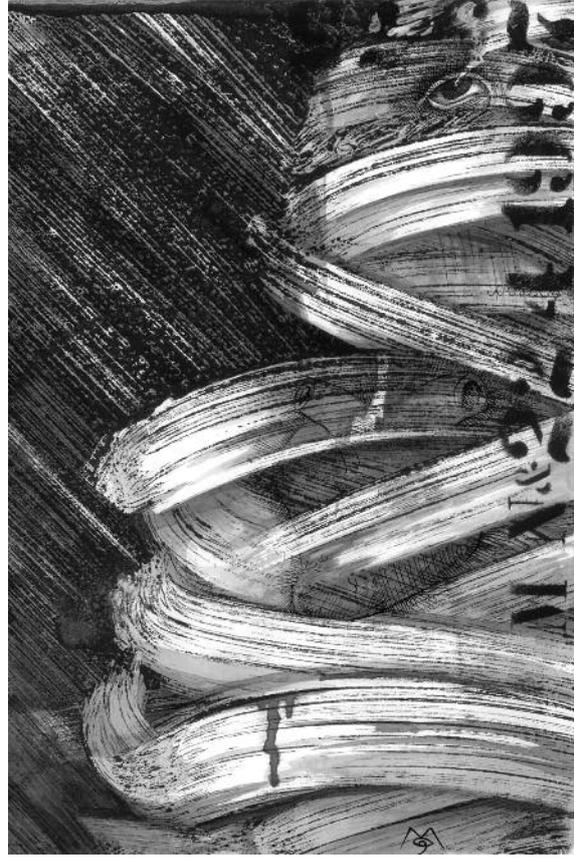
Simultaneously, the trait that characterizes the artist is his noble, incorruptible effort to find a meaning between his identity as an artistic actor and his profound dimension as a loving

consistent expression of the history of all the images that surprise us in the very site of our non-daring, which is generally decisive: it is about the incomprehensible images of ourselves seen in O’Donnell’s mirror (“I think that I think,” “I suffer because I suffer,” “I love that I love.”) of our dreams, doubts and desires; they are the doubt about the symbolic precariousness, the affirmation in the critical optimism manifested in a plastic proposal that is resolved in the lucid lack of definition of the Other as an ecumenical, hedonistic solution of the universality of being, as absurd as it is complex.

The explanation of this is in itself simple and foreign to both the work and the artist. What is certain is that Mauricio is the author of a work that goes beyond the mere comprehension of the creator, and that is why he achieves a creative autonomy that goes beyond the objective fact. I think that the reason for this is not necessar-



▲ *Little Boat*, 2002 (mixed techniques).



▲ *Public Mysteries*, 2002 (ink).



▲ *Emerging Still Life*, 40 x 70 cm, 1999 (oil on cardboard).

ily aesthetic goodness per se; it is something more complex: the virtue of Gómez Morin lies in the consummate fact as a figure and the aesthetic fact as a non-resolved truth. Thus, his painting surprises from the unpredictable and becomes an atmosphere for laughter and weeping, wind and earth, broadness and narrowness and, in the end, is an optimistic proposal that transcends but sharply recovers the crudity of the real fact that often takes shelter in the terrain of simulation. His painting traces the profound well of the consciousness of what is real. In it, expression is no other place than that where aes-

thetic virtue achieves its identity, precisely in its encounter with a complex and diverse course. In this way, Mauricio becomes the owner of an audacity and a talent for encountering fortune (accidental fortune?), of deciphering an immemorial time and space as vast as the one produced in the relationship between the canvas and that other side that is both so far and so near us: representation.

Gómez Morin's is a pictorial vocation from a very profound and indispensable space where the image, the word, the glance, are all argument and proposal, but also —and above all— from that

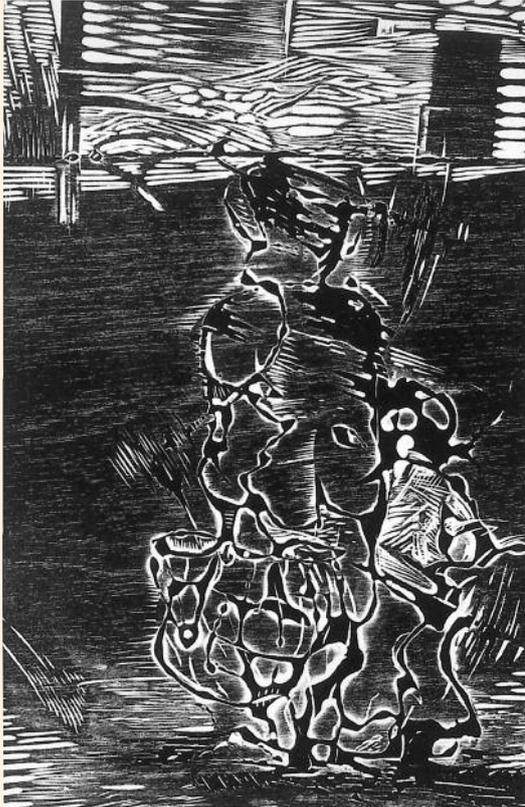
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▲ *Empty Bottles*, 65 x 65 cm, 1999 (oil on wood).



▲ *Stave*, 40 x 20 cm, 1999 (oil on stave).



▲ *The River*, 17 x 30 cm, 1986 (wood engraving).



▲ *Rebellion in the Waiting Rooms*, 12 x 7 cm, 1990 (linoleum print).

Mauricio manages to conquer in his work the vast territories of what Octavio Paz called “the reality of the senses.”

raw place of lucid encounter with the heritage of such an undefined Mexican time that, on a good number of occasions, is the annihilator of its own essence. Mauricio makes a sometimes fantastic journey that ends —or does not end?— in a landing that surprises, because it is the raw evidence of an unawareness that is sometimes unlocatable, but which makes its presence known in the critical stroke of a universal object. While it is true that all painting may also be the negation of its maker, that is, of his lucid clarity preserved for a time in quarantine, of his stubborn clandestinity and his postponed recognition, it also means something that in itself is enormous: it uncovers

a part of what is invisible, and this exercise exposes the intimacy of what is public; and, in the case of Gómez Morin, it sketches with subtle technical decisiveness the codes through which the collective privacy withdraws into itself face to face with its own aesthetic. On this journey, Mauricio preserves all the secrets and silently cultivates the virtue of Auden’s pilgrim, who did not hide his sometimes religious will for artistic citizenship, which is nothing other than the fusion of his visual, plastic work with his conviction of turning the time of his images into circle and season, road and bridge, rest and lighthouse, and into momentary repose for weary hearts. **MM**