

José Molina. Del amor y otros demonios

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José Molina is a poet, a modern-day philosopher, who has had the good fortune to also have miraculous hands. This is a man who loves the human kind and can perceive its vices and weaknesses. And he is a man who loves women. When I first met him, a few years back, I thought that I had seldom come across an artist with such mastery of the sign. I know several painters who have turned the mimesis of reality into a little masterpiece of technique and creativity, but Molina was already doing something more: he was telling fairy tales, mesmerizing tales. A careful observer of the human nature, he had decided to use his amazing pencil to fathom the most secret and impenetrable depths. The monsters staring at me from the easel were black souls projected on faces. Yet, paradoxically – far from eliciting horror – those misshapen jaws stolen from some prehistoric fish, those triple rows of shark teeth, those wide-open jaws, as if ready to snatch, stirred in me a subtle compassion, an unexpected and deep empathy of which I ignored the roots, because that compassion was derived from him, the artist, from his simultaneously ruthless and affectionate investigation of the human being. Nevertheless, beside his creative power, what really struck me was that the deformity, the horror and the unexpected added delicacy to the sign, made even more subtlety interesting by his slow and very detailed progress, his surgical precision. Those were the days of **Predatores** (Predators), so strong, powerful and explosive, that they induced to think that that was the path chosen by the artist: grotesque and impeccable portraits narrating the human being and his demons. But Molina had much more to say. He was set to surprise us again. If with his pencil the artist can create these unsettling hybrids forcing us to look inside ourselves with a novel approach, when he opts for the oil on board, he reveals himself capable of equally jaw-dropping feats. When the doughy matter of the colour comes into play, the hyperreality becomes even more disruptive and a short-circuit occurs between the almost photographic natural landscapes in the background and the characters in the foreground, real, and yet shrouded in surreal atmospheres, restless, like the characters from alien tales that still have to be written. As we become immersed in

the work of the artist, we recognize its recurring themes, ranging from the relationship between the sexes to the *mal de vivre*. They are elaborated in series like **Sentimientos**, **Cosas Humanas** or **Once were Warriors**, the latter taking stocks on the end of the myth, the fall, the loss. This topic is very dear to the artist, who takes it up again, in a very sublime way, in another of his important collections, **Los Olvidados** (The Forgotten), similar in terms of iconography to **Predadores**, though imbued with poignant melancholy. The forgotten are the defeated, the bereft. Faces as craggy as stones, like planets yet to be discovered, people endowed with a sort of third eye. But this is not a third eye allowing them to see beyond the visible, turning them into clairvoyants: it is rather a black hole, an unfathomable and blind abyss, while their body, covered with hair, suggests a brute bestiality. Predators and forsaken. So where can we find redemption? That's where Molina turns out to be a man who loves women: redemption is there, in the female soul and in the female side dwelling in every one of us. The woman, for the artist, is much more than a mere difference of genre, a grace, a way of being. The woman is the creating force, mother earth, the care of the offspring and of the species, a positive force. The project AnimaDonna – produced in parallel with the series **Los Olvidados** – stems from these assumptions. Hundred and fifty works, divided into eighteen chapters, ranging from maternity to the symbiotic relationship between the woman and nature, from eroticism to Pablo Neruda's love poems. A monumental body of works, in which the artist reveals his volcanic and multifaceted creativity. If in some works we find the sharp and incisive stroke of his unmistakable pencil, in others the chromatic power of the oil brings to life hypnotic compositions with turgid shapes, while in others the subject is merely a sketch, a suggestion, a sign as minimal as a primitive graffito, because sometimes the frame takes centre stage. Frames have always had an important role in Molina's work, who crafts them himself or entrusts their design to some trusted artists. In AnimaDonna the frame becomes integral part of the work, showing, once more, that the creativity of the artist is polyhedral and unstoppable. The frames, that Molina crafts by using natural materials like wood, roots, pine cones, earth, musk, integrate and complete the paintings' message, expand their range, turning AnimaDonna into something that is much more than a series of paintings, namely into a complex project where drawing, painting and

sculpture merge in a unique way. **Beloved Earth** is his latest series, still in under way. Here the oil on board finds a new voice, a nocturnal and vibrant luminosity consisting of luminescent shades. Fairy hybrids emerge from dark backgrounds, maidens sleeping inside large seeds, as if ready to bloom, or women equipped with a single wing, whose venations in a dazzling backlighting speak of a pulsating force: the force of the woman and the force of nature, that is deeply rooted in her.