

CAUDURO **VÍCTOR**

a través de su mirada

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Presentation

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Over the centuries, many highly important actions for the progress of humanity would have been forgotten had they not been captured or narrated through an artist's interpretation. In prehistoric caves, human ingenuity was able to leave behind graphic traces of daily life; on clay, stone, papyrus, or codices, and even on the walls of the great pyramids or temples, inscriptions describing tales of battles, dynasties, migrations or the most relevant technological advances, such as the Mayan astronomical calculations, were also preserved. Interpretations of dreams and magical rituals, together with ancient shamanic visions, were similarly perpetuated. We would not know anything about such days without the works immortalized by the genius of artists. Artistic manifestations are the human expressions that best transcend time.

The fact that stone has become Victor Cauduro's favorite canvas is no coincidence, for this is where he seems to connect best with the primal materials he has learned to use in new ways, to continue renewing millenary traditions. Victor Cauduro's work, which is neither lineal nor monothematic, is a testimony to his own originality and audacity. He has explored an endless amount of paths that go from portraits of fantastic beings and beautiful women to paintings of desert flora and sea fauna. He has also focused on reviving episodes of Mexican history such as the colonization of the Baja California territories.

We know that a number of major historical events that contributed to the formation of

our country took place in Querétaro, thus the murals created by the renowned artist Victor Cauduro allow us to revisit certain decisive chapters of our past, such as the War of Independence, the restoration of the Republic and the Mexican Revolution. Many well-known heroes are portrayed next to anonymous men and women. They all gathered in Cauduro's work to invite us to imagine how the events leading to our nation's founding were experienced.

This book is a compilation of paintings created by a unique artist committed to his own creative vision, who has spread the wings of his powerful imagination and invites us to join him on his flight over the vast sea of magical realism with which his work has been associated. Querétaro is proud to have such a leading exponent of contemporary fine art among its citizens.

Santiago de Querétaro, 2014.

The horizon of memory

José M. Springer

We refer to the artistic vision aimed at mimicking the world as realism. Victor Cauduro's painting is the result of a perception that goes beyond reality, for he combines what he sees with what his memory recalls.

In the words of Ignacio Padilla, Victor Cauduro is an artist who liberates the sense of sight, discovers that which cannot be seen by the natural eye and allows magnificence trapped in matter to appear.

While it is true that the history of Western painting is based on the search for an

ideal way of representing reality, it is also a fact that this undertaking has had different interpretations, and not everyone agrees on what is real. Realism is considered to be based on a perspective that allows for dimensional depictions through systems such as painting, drawing or photography.

With the aim of bridging the gap between human visual perception and reality, artists invented perspective; which uses a mathematical and geometrical system to match up what the viewer's eye perceives from a fixed point of observation, with one or more represented vanishing points. But that version of reality was merely a way of seeing the material world, without offering more than a largely rational angle of view that isolated the world of painting from other expressions of sensibility and perception, such as Victor Cauduro's magical realism, abstraction or visual poetry.

Realism was seen as a first step to solving the materialist issue, since image formation does not occur in the retina but in the brain, as revealed by nineteenth-century impressionist artists. The eye is only a receptor. The visual information perceived is transformed within the mind by means of the subjective experience. There is much to add to observation, for in painting, as in all other forms of art, interpretation is much more important than recreation. In his essay, Ignacio Padilla states that for Cauduro, natural forms «cannot, must not and need not be imitated».

In a Platonic sense, forms are used to represent ideas, and as such, cannot be permanently trapped, except via oblique and indirect ways. Cauduro shows that visual structures are interchangeable; forms suggest other forms, and take up space, and appear in memories, in dreams, in imaginings. Through his imagery, what a few of us see as mere limestone, marble or granite, becomes a woman's face and by extension her sensitivity, emotions and feelings.

Starting from the artist's intuitions, the three kingdoms of nature: mineral, vegetable and animal, come together through painting in one same organism, object, landscape or historical account. And this means that his painting, rather than realistic is evocative of recollections and memories, of stories and myths, of languages and rhythms marked by recurring plastic elements.

The search for meanings to which Ignacio Padilla refers to in his essay on Victor Cauduro's work, is the key that opens the door to the viewers' active interpretation, when facing the artist's paintings. His images unveil the potential and poetic associations of painting —and Padilla knows this, for he has cited one of the greatest Mexican poets, Jorge Cuesta, and his maximum creation, "Canto a un dios mineral" ("Chant to a Mineral God")— that take place in the most



emblematic locations, in the most rupertian and enigmatic objects: the desert, stones, flora, and nature as the beginning and end of creation itself. Cauduro's works are naturalistic celebrations of an encounter between sensitivity and vision.

In the works by this artist, we perceive his alchemy, for he brings that which is inanimate to life, transforms insensitivity into emotion, and turns everyday events into extraordinary occasions. His warm colors, his academic drawings and his propensity for displacement of duality (substituting what is real with what is imaginary, what is tangible with what is ungraspable) make him one of the few modern artists to surpass the limits of time by placing himself at the forefront of magical realist painting.

This book, which collects his wide and varied production, will allow students and collectors to document optimism through the revival of painting in debt with the Baroque tradition, in terms of its ability to tell stories, act out scripts in a scene and recreate characters that symbolize romanticism in a



tale, but basically beckon us to contemplate the horizon of time, through memory.

Veracruz, 2014

Victor Cauduro's Neolithic Brush

Ignacio Padilla

Preamble of the Michelangelic Alchemy

Even if the anecdote has been related often, it has never ceased to be eloquent. We know that one day, perhaps tired of his disciples and admirers constantly asking him to reveal the secrets of his sculptural genius, a slightly sour Michelangelo Buonarroti finally admitted that the prodigious forms in his creations had always been hiding in the marble, and his work merely consisted in removing the excess material or mineral slag that throughout thousands of years had enclosed, covered or concealed the latent magnificence of the form imprisoned within the matter. The artist would in this case become a translator, a liberator of the meaning patiently waiting for an interpreter capable of revealing the beauty, unification, harmony and sense granted by sensitive and thoughtful individuals to humanity, through the arts.

Whether true or false, this story is still one of the most decisive metaphors of artistic creation as the liberating and unveiling instance of that which is eternal; not only from the point of view of the participating creator, but also from the perspective of

those who contemplate sublimity that has been masterfully revealed or uncovered by a sensitivity that, at times, seems superhuman. In this regard, artists are, above all, alchemical miracle workers that fulfill their mission of exposing or revealing meanings at the service of humanity, ever since the world is a world. Creators are re-creators, mediums of sorts that assume the task of invoking the ghosts of a collective sensitivity, of the flashes of divinity locked inside their prison of unshaped matter, waiting for a chance to one day fall into the hands of an interpreter who, finally, turns them into communicable emotions.



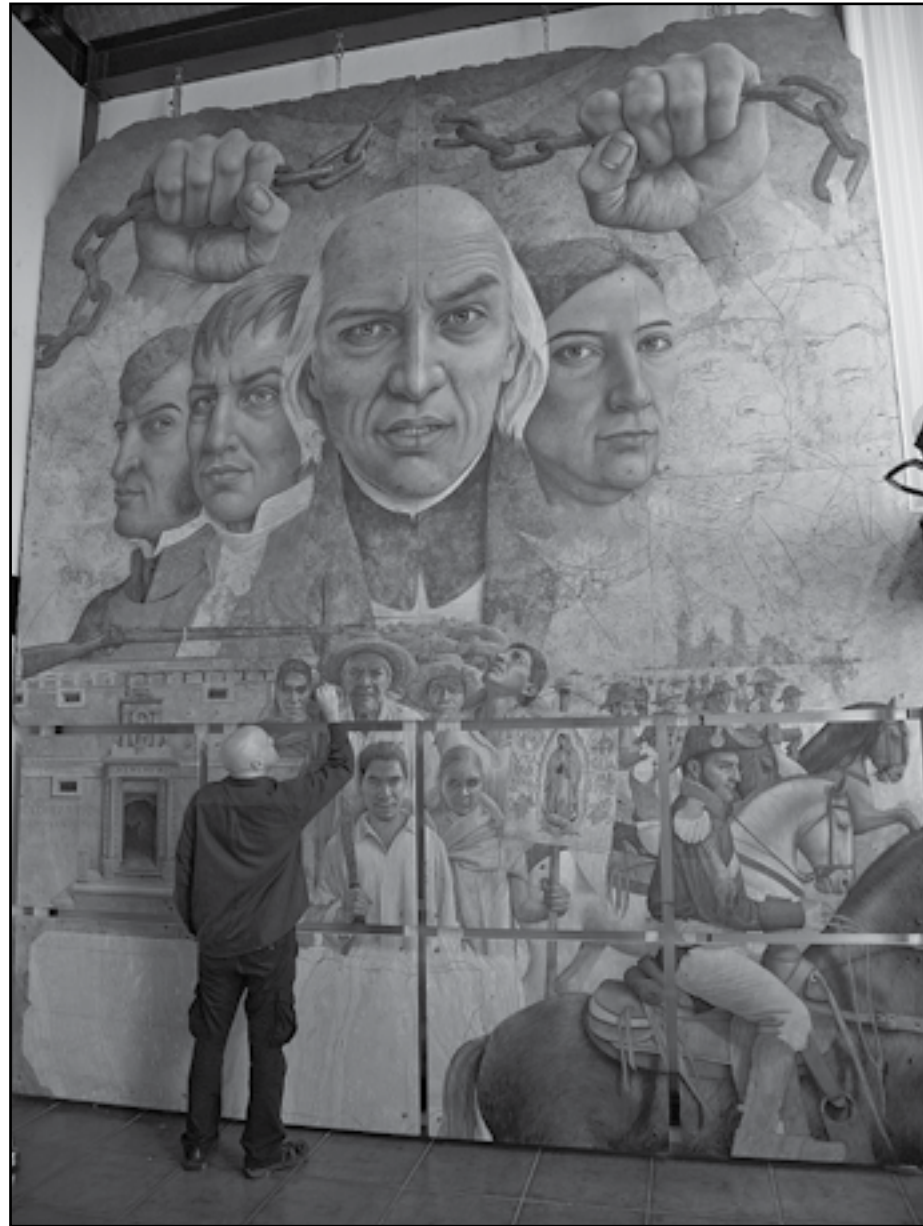
There are many other enlightening anecdotes about Michelangelo Buonarroti's artistic work, mostly related to his role as a paradigmatic creator engaged in a temperamental odyssey of ingenuity and in deep dialogue with the raw materials he chose, or that chose him, for expression. Throughout these biographical insights, the Florentine artist appears in his legend as a necessarily promethean and almost Faustian being, whose first step toward his own enlightenment and ulterior revelation to others of all that he learned during his life-long aesthetic journey, had to do with the secret scheme of the occult.

In this sense, Michelangelo was, or we could also say, acquired, a Pygmalionic presence, for he reminds us that artists are hopelessly condemned to fall in love with their works, which are not really theirs, for they are given, assigned or offered to them in custody by nature or by divinity. The energy in a David, the patriarchal severity of a Moses and even the paradoxical vitality of a Jesus Christ lying lifeless in his young mother's arms, are not as much an audacity but a gift of the gods to men through Michelangelo. The artist in these legends did



not commit blasphemy when he sculpted his Moses and ordered him to speak: the truth is that he pleaded or raised a prayer to the gods, to thank them for making him an object of revelation. The Florentine artist did not invent anything as we cinematically imagine him placing forms in the clouds above Carrara that would later adorn the Sistine Chapel: he actually deciphered the Creation by recreating what until then seemed uncreated; Michelangelo did not lie when he resisted to produce a predesigned mural by arguing that he was nothing more than a sculptor: in fact, he acknowledged that the arts, no matter their form, are always and inevitably the mere transformation of something already in existence.

Every poet, musician or painter is a sculptor of the Michelangelic movement when he or she concentrates mostly in perceiving pre-existing forms, to then release them from confinement. So Michelangelo's greatest works, whether literary, mural or sculptural, were at all times rigorously respectful of the materials used for expres-



sion, as forthright tributes to the rocks or pigments from which both art and life itself originated. Such is the Florentine's lesson that the Mexican artist Victor Cauduro learned before and better than many.

Intuitions of form

As any artist that takes pride in working within the field of figurative representation, Victor Cauduro seems uncomfortable with hyperrealism, an elusive movement which critics insist on ascribing to him and many of his contemporaries. With the wisdom and humbleness of the classical-style artists that served as tutors throughout the path of this self-taught artist, Cauduro knows that reality cannot be, and does not have to be, imitated. It is best to assume that art is basically destined to imitate that which is essentially human, and has been used in this way ever since the first man painted the first bison and the first humans, on the walls of a cave or on a rock; significant depictions that since then were much more than a bison and much more than a picture of a few men.

If we assume that artists are not demiurges but instead liberators of original forms, we will realize that their point of departure is basically the foundation of human culture, for they will always act in the role of eternal children in search of existing forms that amaze them, and also amaze us. Every aesthetic expression of the human spirit is a mere variation of the endless transformations of matter that, fortunately, is not created nor destroyed. Artists understand better than others that all things existing here and now, since the beginning of time, invite us to feel, to dream and to set free all that which accompanies human beings throughout their troubled journey from the cradle to the grave, and perhaps beyond.



One morning, Victor Cauduro found a rock, took it to his studio and waited for its hidden forms to appear. Back then, the artist was painting fragmented men and women with oil on canvas, so the secrets in the rock attacked him at close range almost as in response to his earlier reflections on the presence of absence. The face of a sleeping woman finally appeared on the rock, and that is when Cauduro began his love affair with pure matter forms, which even today can be perceived in all his works.

Searching hard for signs in matter and yet marveling at them has been, and continues to be, Victor Cauduro's tireless labor: be it on the paper or canvas where he captured his first intuitions of the world; or on the river rock that motivated his reunion and perpetual love affair with the life encrypted in the mineral kingdom; or in the hyperbolic sea fauna, as an inanimate animator of any life form; or in the desert proclaiming that salt can kill us but also give us life; or in the ostrich egg in which Cauduro once discovered a female breast that, in turn, retold him of the Milky Way's mythical, physical and metaphysical birth.

A spontaneous hunter of materials and a wandering liberator of forms hidden in the natural environment, an untiring reader of bubbles floating in the void surrounding us, Victor Cauduro has demonstrated, in each one of his works, that there is no such thing as abstract art, and there will never be, for he reminds us that attributing meanings to all that is around us, especially to what appears to make no sense, is inherent to humans.

Roman Gubern rightly referred to our natural instinct of providing meanings to unshaped objects as *figurative impulse*, and his explanation, both clear and convincing, can be read in Victor Cauduro's aesthet-



ics. As the little boy who discovers in the clouds ducks he wants to touch or dragons that make him afraid; or as devout people claiming to have seen Marian apparitions or apocalyptic visions, humans have always known that by reading lines on rocks, they could find the hidden order of what would otherwise become unbearably chaotic or inscrutable. While providing a meaning to what without us would not have a meaning at all, we get caught up in the pleasure of continuing the unfinished work of Creation; we also tend to articulate whatever is inarticulate. Thanks to the arts, we are the Verb that bursts into Nothingness with the aim of reinventing it, by casting on it our own beauty, our own ambitions, our own fears and perhaps our own sublime losses.

We are therefore not in search of meanings: we are part of the search itself, and the artist is the beacon lighting the path ahead, for us all. Our daily dialogue with matter, mostly through our own body, is of course a specular activity: we search for an expres-

sion of lightness in weight; we question the material world in order to find out how spiritual we are. We fail to understand infinity because we are finite; but then again, we were divinely endowed with an intuition of eternity in the atoms that make us. Unable to abstract because we are absolutely concrete; we are capable of noticing blemishes on rocks, or swollen clouds in the sky, and in consequence discover that we go through life dispensing sense and order, and breathing beauty and harmony into anything chaotic and dismembered. So we decipher ourselves when we decipher artistic works as the synthesis of that which is ethereal and is trapped in the radical physical world. This, of course, is a hopeless task, but the nobility and greatness of aesthetic experiences depend on it; and so does the artist's fate.

Incomplete chants to a mineral god

Our maturity as spectators and reenactors of aesthetic experiences depends on enlightenments around which all works and all men swarm and develop. Cauduro's perception of a woman's face on a rock is one of such epiphanies, one of such instants when an artist becomes a releaser of forms and part of a chain of lightning strikes happily linked together ever since others like him, a long time ago, were similarly enlightened and learned how to explain their insights to the artists of posterity.

Maybe the lesson of respect that modern man must have for everything primeval is also encrypted in another Michelangelic legend that states that the great Florentine artist left the Slaves that still make us tremble and are held in the halls of the Louvre Museum, intentionally unfinished. That is where Auguste Rodin must have studied them, centuries later; and from them he learned that in all transformed or

transformable substance, a reminiscence of raw matter needs to be respected and even preserved.

As he stood before Michelangelo's incomplete stone statues, Rodin acknowledged that signs of the narrative meaning contained in the raw materials used to create never entirely finished artworks, possibly had to be, or necessarily needed to be, preserved, just as life should. The story of a rock can only be told if its appearance is left intact; art improves greatly when artists preserve features, marks, traces that remind us that art is more an effort at transformation than invention. So Rodin's Dantesque thinker and hellish lovers, just as Michelangelo's Slaves are partial prisoners of the marble from which they emerged: their lightness and spiritual sublimity were not nullified but instead exalted, surely because their integrity as entities in eternal process, is still quite distinguishable. Just like humans, works that show respect to the brutality of materials make us shiver with their heroic but vain effort of abandoning their prison of matter of which we also once emerged and to which we will, one day, inevitably return.

This is what Victor Cauduro often reflects on while he searches for, finds, and works with original and primary materials, without giving in to the temptation of altering them completely. His insistence on transforming that which is invisible without annulling pre-existing qualities is a form of respect, a tribute to the origin of everything and everyone. We know that on another day, already in his quest and considering the limits of matter, Victor Cauduro rescued one more rock with a reddish smear. He also took the rock home and allowed himself to be overwhelmed by it, realizing that he must not tamper with its red smudge to make it disappear, that it had to be left alone, right in the middle of his creation; so he showed his respect by accompanying it with images that

only exalted its meaning instead of transforming it. Figurative impulse has to do with resisting the temptation of going against the nature of the material used, to create a figure: it is the artist's mission to defend the preeminence of such matter, so its essence remains and reminds us where everything comes from; where we all come from.

We are unfinished beings, but our enormity lies precisely in such unfinishedness that we complete once we provide a meaning to the work of art with which the artist confronts us. Cauduro began creating on stone whilst he was immersed in reflecting on the union of apparent opposites, of what is and what is not. His unfinished creatures are there to prove so, men and women first on canvas and then on stone, who support themselves and act in the world thanks to their ghostly limbs. The man kneeling on the shadow of his leg; the back we do not see but understand, enclosing a halo of life; the presence of absence as the speculation of Cauduro's reflection of the cosmos.





Cauduro's encounter with stone as material support for his most recent works is therefore a man's reencounter with the eternity of forms. As any artist who claims to be absolutely modern, he is fully aware of what is radically ancient. His work is based on the fundamental assumption that a creator is the constant reincarnation of a pre-logical child and pre-literature society shaman. His contribution is part of the reintegration of consciousness that one way or another began with cave art, which is also said to have influenced Picasso's work.

Beyond its anticipatory effect or totemic virtue, beyond its almost religious devotion to the life containing the universe of inanimate objects, the Altamira bison is reinstated into the feat of contemporary art with works on stone that more than anything have become narrative subtractions of man outside the boundaries of time.

Also in Cauduro's works, the animal, the object or the human face we see are forms in perpetual motion, captured at moments in time full of endless possibilities: in works of art, beasts have already been hunted, will have to be hunted, or may not be hunted; in works of art, animals are not bison, are all the bison and are more than all bison; in works of art, living beings are more than alive, and are depicted when the real bison has already been captured, together with everything that nature is, has been or could be, when observed and transformed by a sensitive representative of all men, that happens to be the artist.



To a large extent, the furious, tireless and relentless evolution of bison cave painting is condensed in a single allegory of the progress of an artist and his creatures. Just as Achilles, Cauduro runs to catch up with

the tortoise, hoping to win the race toward aesthetic perfection, which we know is impossible but follow anyway, as we continue on our path to death.

This race from origin to origin explains why artists like Victor Cauduro are constantly improving. This process of expression for the integration of what we are and what we are not, of matter and soul, of form and content, has led Cauduro to outright reflections on the recovery of both the real and the allegorical beauty of computer motherboards. Astonished as a new troglodyte living in a technology world that is not always and not necessarily happy; surprised by the cabalistic beauty of the binary language used in microcomputers, Cauduro has worked on totally prehistoric stones and on the intricately solid brightness of electronic circuits that, in the end, are the epitome of the code of that which exists and has existed.

The zero and one digits, positive and negative charges, light and darkness, describe a small circuit and the gigantic man of genetics, dialectics and nuclear physics that for now takes us back to the origins of the universe. The artist as an accelerator of particles and a crusader in search of the Higgs Grail. A creator working at this moment in time, exactly when the greatest communications revolution has shocked us all and has made us go back to babbling, as newborns or revived Neanderthals. With his work, Cauduro reminds us that every revolution and all dystopia are involutions toward impossible utopias that can only be invoked through the arts. By looking at Cauduro's work, by feeling and sharing his revelations, we understand the dialectical relationship between one and zero, we reclaim the mathematical excitement of the particles we are made of, which were already around at the beginning of the cosmos. The millennium, after all, is all the millenia. Progress moves



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