Van Laere Contemporary Art is situated in the artistic south side of Antwerp, right in front of Micheline Swajcer Gallery and in between the MUHKA and the Museum voor Schone Kunsten

**JUAN USLE / VICKY CIVERA**

**644 COMUN**

22 October - 27 November 1999
opening on Thursday 21 October from 6 - 9 PM

**VICKY CIVERA**

Born in 1955 in Sugunto, Spain, Vicky Civera lives and works between Saro and New York.

First known in Spain for paintings which used the dynamic of the circle while also taking advantage of diverse materials and gestural freedom, Victoria Civera moved to New York in 1987. Her painting then became more intimate and enigmatic, with smaller formats, and at the same time, she extended her pictorial vocabulary to include sculpture and installations.
These are strange stagings which, although they borrow from historical models of abstraction, nonetheless evoke the dream-like world of the surrealists. Like sensory images in a dream, they seem to convey a host of impressions in which distinct events such as those of real life are intermingled with others that are blurry, absurd or extravagant. Always engaged in pictorial approach, the artist is seeking to examine the way we experience things as fragmentary, incomplete, made of sensations and intuitions that reason is then forced to order. With materials chosen for their visual and tactile qualities, and with ambiguous, allusive shapes, she multiplies the metaphors of bodies, signs and symbols in order to articulate a language without grammar which she invites us to decipher.

Victoria Civera's abstract paintings have a certain air of sly, shy irony. Again and again one sees variations on the same idea: a small geometrical format - circle, ellipse, rectangle, but mostly Malevichian square - with its center marked, often by an esoterically shaped element when not a populist polka dot.

Her works seem subliminally satiric, or at least ironically mischievous. She treats the elements of abstraction casually, toying
with them, if with a nonchalance that seems studied. At the same time, her paintings look secretive, as though trying to hide their real, disturbing meaning from us. On the surface, they look like postmodernist texts, that is, hybrids of contradictory codes. But their codes do not come together in a seamless way. There is an irksome friction to her works. Her center seems to disturb the harmony of the space it is in, however much it marks the space as a rational order. The pattern seems inherently absurd, for all the regularities in it. Civera's abstract center has been interpreted as an eccentric version of the female symbol.

In a sense, the quirky way Civera handles geometrical form restores it to psychological significance. It can still be used to convey nonobjective feeling, as Malevich called it. The difference between Malevich and Civera is the difference between a modern tragic sensibility and a postmodern comic sensibility, between heroic modern breakthrough to the unknown and postmodern playfulness with the known. But both achieve an effect of uncanniness through incongruity, except that it has a different meaning in modernity and postmodernity.

Based on Donald Kuspit.

JUAN USLÉ


Uslé is trying out different strategies and attitudes. He is, above all, thinking about painting. He is trying to amplify his world,
or the world, from the same place. There is a constant temperature but a different strategy is employed in each work. The overall impression is liquid because the images lie within the mind - inside, as it were, the process of dreaming and thinking. Uslé observes: 'I have a dual attitude to the process. On the one hand, I continue yearling for the magic place in which the painting attains a high degree of vibration, its greatest intensity. I still have a feeling of vague control just within my grasp, where time seems to oscillate between the immediacy of the execution and a more permeable, at times almost ancestral, presence. And at the same time, there is a deliberate attitude of dissection that is more pragmatic and analytical. I am becoming freer in my work, using different strategies so that this fragmentary dissection does not lead me to an excessively strict use of the purely semantic grammatical elements extracted from the process itself.'

Juan Uslé - ©Orcutt

Uslé's work comes through with strength and passes the test of sincerity. Along with Vicky Civera the two artists produced some of the most powerful images of these years and took Spanish painting out of its historic delay.

Based on Kevin Power.

Juan Uslé - ©Orcutt

Statements from Juan Uslé in conversation with Maria DE CORRAL ("TEMA CELESTE" sept. 1998).

- "First of all painting is desire, the wish to dirty your hands. And those who undertake it have to invent new rules for themselves at every moment."
- "Irony, emotion and meditation, have become the main ingredients of today's abstract painting."
- "At the same time though, a painting is unique and unrepeatable."
- "I am an emigrant just like so many others belonging to European culture have been. I continue to be a peasant who has never moved from his own piece of land. I work over the rough three-dimensional surfaces of the universe of painting. I am fascinated to know I am travelling towards an undefined destination."
Forthcoming exhibitions:

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http://users.compaqnet.be/VanLaere

Van Laere Contemporary Art:

Ricci Albenda, Dieter Appelt, Koen Broucke, Victoria Civera, Peter De Cupere, Denmark, Jonathan Horowitz, Michel Huisman, Leiko Ikemura, Maryan Najd, Mathias Lanfer, Luca Pancrazzi, Manuela Sedmach, Jan Van Munster, Mark Verstockt, Gerhard Winkler, Juan Uslé,

Dieter Appelt

Dieter Appelt
Koen Broucke, "Untitled", 1997, aquarel

Luca Pancrazzi, “Interno”, 1998, oil on wood
©Felix Tirry

Michel Huisman, N°63, 1996

Dieter Appelt
Manuela Sedmach

Jonathan Horowitz, "Je t'aime", video

Denmark, "Dode Letters, verbrand (12x), 1998

Denmark, "Dood archief", 1990-1999
Van Laere Contemporary Art

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Opening hours:
Tuesdays till Saturdays : 2 - 6 PM