

NY ARTS

INTERNATIONAL EDITION
Great Britain £8
Japan ¥1,500
Canada \$13.90
USA \$10.00

www.nyartsmagazine.com
Vol 15 Spring 2010

Limited Edition
Carlos Aquilino



CHAOS THEORY

Suzie Walsh on Beatrice Burel

Jill Smith

Spanish painter Carlos Aquilino works in a variety of styles to explore themes as wide-ranging as the role of the individual in society to the rhythms and logic of chaos. His background and approach to art making are distinctive and compelling. He started his career with his first exhibition in 1975 in Las Palmas (Spain), at which time he also participated in several national painting competitions and group exhibitions. In the same year, he illustrated the book of poems, *Máscaras*. In 1977, he won the Painting Prize of the City of Madrid (Spain) followed by the Grand Medal of Sculpture at the Anzio International Art Competition in Rome (Italy). In the years and decades following this auspicious start of his career, he continued to travel and hone his artistic craft in locations all over the world, including: Vienna, Austria (1979); Virginia, Unites States (1983); New Mexico, Unites States (1983); Romania (1995); and Paris, France (2000). Today he lives and works in Madrid, the city of his birth.

His paintings of the 1990s and 2000s are reminiscent of the Metaphysical Painting School of the teens and 20s, in his exploration of the unconscious through dreamscapes, surreal vistas, and the arrangement of seemingly unrelated objects. Sculptural forms are rendered naturalistically, yet located in strange locales. Employing his keen and compulsive observation of the world around him, he finds inspiration in



every aspect of his daily life. Through his unflinching gaze, he captures life's deeper truths, gleaned through a lifetime of experience and travel. "I paint, make drawings and sculptures using any and all materials I find around myself," he explains. "I use them as classically as possible...meaning...if I want to paint, I paint over what is possible and where it is possible, whether this is on the floor, on a table, in a cafe or wherever I go." Using classical techniques, he renders his depictions life-like through his adept approach to the materiality of his paint, as well as his subtle and tenuous line and brushwork. Through his total control of medium (generally oils) and composition, and his expressive surfaces, he pours his own imaginative creativity into each painting. In palettes that range from ominous cool hues to smoldering warm ones, these images are portentous and muted expressions of Aquilino's strange and marvelous fantasies.

His current body of work is more whimsical in concept and execution. They consist of all-over compositions that depict patterns, which from afar appear abstract. However, upon closer inspection, they reveal themselves to be detailed and carefully rendered line drawings of recognizable imagery: city buildings, cars, mask-like faces, and words. They evoke the chaos of the city; its speed, crowding, and excitement emanates from these canvases, literally dropping the viewer into the middle of the chaotic hubbub of the metropolis. There is a folkloric quality to these emblematic images as well in their simple graphic styles, which consist of black line work on white grounds, and are usually filled in with shockingly bright hues: yellows, oranges, violets, hot pinks, cerulean blues, lime greens. Words in Spanish and English are embedded into the patterning, like secret messages that need to be decoded: "Paz," "Aqui," "Amor," "Voy," "Madrid," "Where is it," "Free," "Please," "I Love," "Open," "Gallery," "New York." Other freestanding letters float like graphic elements devoid of lexical signification. Like Picasso's early cubist collages, these letters and words function as loose referents to the city, yet maintain a simultaneous sense of ambiguity: Are they from store signs? From conversations? From advertisements? Language permeates city life; we are constantly inun-



dated with visual and aural words, a quotidian experience that Aquilino so aptly captures through these images.

Drawing to mind the dynamic patterning and coloring of traditional Mexican art, the influence of his time spent in that country is also evident. These images also evoke the all-over patterning of Pop artist, Keith Haring, who like Aquilino, employed bold graphics and representations of crowded people and city scenes to evoke the buzzing, swirling, rhythmic beats of city life. Drawing on the best of Pop traditions, graphic art, Surrealism, and traditional Latin American styles, Aquilino creates stunning and gripping images that pull the viewer in and don't let go, resulting in a visual experience that is akin to a reckless taxi ride through New York's Time Square: the glaring lights, jolting smells, and clamorous noise of the city streets are literally felt as one gets lost in these forceful and gripping images.

Instinctive and intuitive, Aquilino is fanatical about his art, working constantly. Always marching to the beat of his own drum, he is not concerned by the ebbs and flows of trends and fashions; rather, he is perpetually true to his own spirit. There is a structure and logic to these images of chaos, a grace and elegance that emerges from their churning patterns. And this is Aquilino's ultimate message: his fascination with the city stems from its enduring and ceaseless energy and vigor, qualities that he finds beautiful, an insight that he deftly shares with his audience. □