

## Fantastical Realities

Suzie Walshe on Carlos Aquilino



The epic works of Carlos Aquilino perfectly capture the contemporary arts preference for an all-inclusive, creative perspective. In his work, Spanish artist Aquilino deals with life's subjects, events, moods and day-to-day trivialities. Informed by an interest in the place of the individual within society, Aquilino is an unusual observer free from the restrictions and stereotypes of many lesser artists. An audacious painter, Aquilino has created a body of complex Surreal and geometric compositions that combine the influences of Cubism and Futurism.

Typically using a limited number of striking colors, Aquilino's works turn the human figure into a composition of simple, angular shapes, which in more recent work appear overlaid in a strong organic grid of cultural motifs and repeated imagery. Both Aquilino's symbolic paintings and new line works are immediately recogniz-

**"En estos dibujos intento reflejar la ciudad en la que vivo, llena de gente dando vueltas entre unos y otros, esquivando coches, obras interminables, atascos infinitos y todo ello salpicado de insultos típicos de este país. Pero eso sí, todo ello amenizado con el sonido de guitarras españolas que apenas se oyen en el laberinto de gente y de calles repletas de bares, donde el criterio es la norma y el ruido es el ambiente cotidiano. Todos ellos están buscando algo que acaban encontrando en un día de resaca. Y mañana, será otro día."**

able by their daring yet subtle narratives and message. Color is also of paramount importance to the artist's paintings, whose palette is a wash of soft blues, peaches, sea foam greens, and grays, accented with brilliant vermilions and sunny yellows.

Aquilino's work evolves from the depths of his soul, out of the essential needs to express himself. "I paint, make drawings and sculptures using any and all materials I find around myself" Aquilino says, "I use them as classically as possible...meaning...if I want to paint, I paint over what is possible and where is possible, whether this is on the floor, on a table, in a cafe or wherever I go."

Aquilino's unusual work exhibits a personality and aesthetic that is diagrammatic, invented, historical, and nonsensical all at once. His work captures all the energy and spectacle of portraiture, while presenting a subversive world that is personal as well as impersonal. Despite being commercially in demand, Aquilino's art is also not influenced by the current trends of contemporary art, giving his overt a timeless quality. He transposes his own sensibility into colors and forms, in order to achieve a raw aesthetic that evokes the kind of honesty that is found deep within the human spirit.

Combining both figurative and non-figurative elements with his love of strong lines and vivid colors, he creates bold, poetic works. Inspired by his encounters with different people, in *El amigo del perro*, and *El visitante enamorado* he paints large close-up portraits. Expressing his impressions of the people he meets, these works also reflect the varied expressions that can be found in the human face. Works such as *El saludo*, *El embarcadero*, and *Conversación veneciana* investigate the intersections of space, place, time, memory, culture, and history. Aquilino's unconventional works form optical techniques and social analyses that utilize the artist's core talents from his organic use of paint to the drama of sweeping and swirling brush-stroke which create a subtle psychological intensity. His focus on the human figure in a variety of fractured, chaotic environments also generates themes of spirituality, sexuality, and social identity—all related to personal experience.

Aquilino's older works feature an astonishing sculptural palette of illuminant color. In *Las niñeras del Retiro*, 2002 Aq-

uilino has the ability to transform reality into an accomplished work. The vivid colors represent Aquilino's rich, generous, and impetuous inner-self. But it is Aquilino's recent work that truly highlights the formal logic of his pictorial architecture. From the exaggerated perspective, with its lines in strange escorza (foreshortened figures), to the expressive compositions, and sculptural line, Aquilino's creates an entirely personal discourse, transmitting the viewer to a metaphysical world. These infinite cosmoes transcend the limits of the page, spilling over the paper's edge in the case of *Kosa Rica* and *Muéveté!*

At once epic and intimate, the painting is infused with references to literature and aspects of the Mediterranean and Near-Eastern worlds from an intuitive point of view. Many of Aquilino's works appear almost cryptic in their meaning—devoted to nuance and primitive models of humanity, the faces and forms metamorphose into cubist forms through vivid juxtaposition.

In these drawings Aquilino seeks to reflect the city in which he lives, full of people walking around among the others, avoiding cars, endless activity, infinite traffic jams and the density of his environment. Interspersed in this imagery is text and iconic symbols of his home-



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land. Seeing the city as a theater upon which the populations moves Aquilino's goal is to observe and document his countrymen and their domain, while infusing them with his own fantastical imagination and unique visions of humanity and the existential nature of our transience existence. The result is a series of works with a timeless, magical quality. Reminiscent of a dream voyage to a exotic place, his pictures are deeply personal, evoking his own subconsciousness while also revealing universal truths about the journey and celebration of life. □

Top left: **Carlos Aquilino**, *Juego acuático*. Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm. Courtesy of the artist.  
Top right: **Carlos Aquilino**, *Kosa Rica!* Ink on paper, 50 x 50 cm. Courtesy of the artist.  
Bottom center: **Carlos Aquilino**, *Sin Título (Untitled)*, 2009. Cardboard and acrylic, 31 x 30 x 38 cm. Courtesy of the artist.