

Barro, David, "The Felix Show. The game consists of never giving up dreaming", *Félix Fernández Fernández*, Lugo, Museo Provincial de Lugo, 2006, Cat. Exp.

*The Felix Show. The game consists of never giving up dreaming.*

I start writing these lines straight, with the only impertinence of an austere photography which shows Félix Fernández with his nose hit (or operated) and wearing a white t-shirt. At the same time, he confesses aloud and in writing being sensitive to beauty. The image turns out to be round, effective and for sure, we could reveal through it his secrets, which are not secrets but truths that, as far as I understand, need to transpire.

The picture hides the sadness kept behind a clown's nose or the loneliness, aftermath of celebrity, of excessive success. Our need to appear, once again, in the yellow press or to be just as we think others want us to be has grown bigger. And that is a great reason to get a broken nose, even by both sides.

Some time ago I referred to Félix Fernández's works as sociological documents on a precise conduct and as opposition to imposition, as a search for sense. Félix Fernández does not camouflage like a *flâneur* for this search. The other way round, he shows off up to excess, he unfolds, he multiplies, he deconstructs himself. Just as in Joe Dallesandro's *Trash*, he shows himself perfectly in order to understand the search means the wait.

In his *Sensible a la belleza* (sensitive to beauty) photography, Félix Fernández waits proudly, sure of his beauty as that mythic Ophelia in the portrait by Millais who floats alive (never drowned, noted Mallarmé) before the disaster turned to idyllic landscape. Rimbaud described her as follows: 'Oh, pale Ophelia, as beautiful as snow!'. As in *The Félix Show*, everything consists of never giving up dreaming. Let us think about why children never want to go to bed, or drunkards who persist in going on before an everlasting night utopia.

The wish of being able to keep on looking, dreaming, makes everything move in the shape of extreme need, just like a nightwalker who needs going on dreaming not to plunge onto the floor, as Nietzsche would say. For Félix Fernández waking up from that fortunate permanent dream, from that represented euphoria, would mean plunge onto the floor as shown in his dog-man, twisted over himself, dying in his sexuality ruined by others. That is why Félix keeps on being sensitive to beauty, with that impassive gesture, proud. His whole work bends from the conflict between the individual and society, to end up activating a kaleidoscopic truth on feelings which brushes schizophrenia.

But, "In the dreamer's dream, the dreamed one awoke" as Borges expresses in his fiction entitled '*Las ruinas circulares*' (Circular Ruins) included in *El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan* (The garden of the bifurcating paths). I wonder what would happen if that sensitive to beauty man just gave up being sensitive.

There is a vital need to transvestite reality in order to brush a decadent (for sure) subversion. Félix Fernández may think glamour is above all and like Warhol, he tries to build his own set to reinforce that longing; 'I just want to be something when I am at a party's entrance and I need to be able to come in' affirmed Andy Warhol. And Félix also wants his own show.

Let us think now about the film *The Truman Show*, where the main

character is at the same time the main character in a successful TV show not being aware of that. His life is the plot of both the TV series and everything surrounding him including his friends and his wife who are fake for they are actors. The city he lives in is a huge set. As a result it shows an 'American' style brand new world, an artificial and a little bowl one. Truman was born 'live' and he was almost killed 'live'. The only thing that matters is just that, the live action, the audience. That is not very far from the passion exhibitionism Félix Fernández plans in some pictures belonging to the series *1.000 maneras de dormir tranquilo* (1.000 ways of sleeping calmly). Félix stages his own burial, his Arnolfini style wedding, his sleep... And also how, just like Truman, he is being recorded by several video cameras. Félix Fernández as a character also longs to be a television hero out of nothingness.

As Truman, Félix Fernández starts to wonder about the world he lives in, the recurrent actions, the coincidences. Is ours a perfect world? Plato interpreted the world as an imperfect representation, a representation made up through our own ideology. At the end of the film, Truman takes pains to break that aseptic and superficial perfection and runs the risk before a world which is much worse than the one he lives in, as sort of a 'creator god' warns him; meanwhile his audience, so loyal during so many years, just wonder about the programme next: if we are not on TV, we just are not.

The question of law would be the following: Do we accept everything we watch?. Truman's world provides us with some hints in sinister humour style: his teacher discourages him making him think everything is already done, the travel agency print ads show planes pierced by rays and a warning: 'This could happen to you'... Truman accepts that, he does not think about all those contradictions. Just like us in our everyday life. We do not understand things may not be as we are told they are.

Every action Félix carries out are the consequence of a built narration though they seem sort of an improvised performance. A narration of resistance before the contradictions mentioned above: 'It is not the same thing to see how a typhoon comes standing up than to do it sitting down', he said in an interview with José Manuel Lens. The sentence could be applied to our attitude when watching television. Félix grafts his critic vision in kind of a Derrida style deconstruction in his work *Prime Time*, a faltering tale pointing a broken, fake and strange looking television set. Starting from a series of arrogant speeches, silences, attempts and pauses. As in those programmes which show television highlight moments, Félix Fernández takes the spectator to a dizzy story with a clear apocalyptic message with disguised pornography, effervescent wars made fizzy drink ads, a football match spectators pointed as protagonists by the players themselves, and fortune tellers ascertaining our future. As I have already pointed, the bottom line of Félix Fernández's discourse is the senseless search of sense, the experimentation which allows us to explain our strategy, to straighten our way thanks to the questioning of everything surrounding us and doubting before every image.

Television provided the raw material for this whole work, however, the cynical eyes of journalistic double standards stuck to it in an absurd censor attack which reminds me the American nonsense regarding Michael Jackson's sister's slippery boob (I think her name is Janet) which knocked out the Superbowl. I was in my way to a wedding when I saw a newspaper's culture section page dedicated to boobs (much bigger, of

course) Félix Fernández had torn apart from his corset just like Justin Timberlake did to poor Janet, who later confessed having rehearsed the action. The text for the local paper La Voz de Galicia written by Rubén Santamarta reads as follows: "More than a spectator did not wait to read the credits and abandoned the venue, blushed, before the end. It was not displayed, neither at the beginning nor at the end any explicit content warning. There was neither any warning outside the hall *Prime time* was shown nor in the foyer where the exhibition was announced. Only a single reference in the brochures explains the audience would find a story with a 'clearly apocalyptic message, in disguised pornography'. Everything fine but in that emphasis on the audience (word the journalist repeats redundantly along the whole text), the mass media (I'm sure there were more news readers than audience at the exhibition) was not taken into account when illustrating the piece with the image of that porn actress who made him be so restless. Which attitude is more provocative? The work in the end had mucho mere sense, if possible, demonstrating the ambivalence of communication also in written form.

Félix Fernández entitled that individual exhibition for the Torrente Ballester Centre 'Descent', advising it meant to be 'a conscience point after chaos provided that the fact of stating a descent implies the knowledge of an upper vital stage, being this previous or subsequent'. In short, a baroque decline in agreement with the instability of the world we live in, which is so hungry of certainties.

This way, the body Félix Fernández always displays, which is the ground of his whole work, is not anything else but the skin of fear, of success, of injustice and over all, the skin of the doubts and the nerves of those willing to be accepted by those willing to be accepted. All that can be found in his words in the performance carried out in the Sala San Hermenegildo in Sevilla, in the Contenedores 05 Festival: "... I hope nerves do not betray me and show a wrong image of what I really am. Live acts are like this, a normal risk of the auto-construction of ourselves we all have. Imagine I get covered in a rash'. What would everyone think about us? This question turns out constantly in the work or feelings strip-tease proposed by Félix Fernández. Everything is a kind of *trompe l'oeil* or make-up that ends up building a reality.

Even though the words written here are nothing else but introductory words for a character who fights against imposition and lies, able to satirise about social shame and the need we suffer to overcome time. Félix Fernández starts a trip to the depths of his conscious feeling about the fragility we feel before the loss of a reference. 'Hold my hand and take me to somewhere interesting', he states in one of his works. Even so, someone may think it is about an eccentric person, when our artist is not anything else but a weirdo who goes up and down (weirdo meaning clearly a scarce good) playing the game of never giving up dreaming.