

Wisdom and evolution in the painting of Alberto Reguera

by Marcos Ricardo Barnatan

For more than ten years I have been following the artistic career of Alberto Reguera, one of the most interesting painters in what is known as Spanish "lyrical abstraction." In addition to vigorously revindicating a specifically European tradition of abstraction, this movement reaffirms the renewed validity of painting in view of the lurking challenges of new artistic techniques and media. In all this time, the international prestige of Reguera's work has never stopped growing and extending itself, his works being exhibited in important public and private spaces in various European capitals and the United States.

Reguera was born in 1961 in the beautiful Castilian city of Segovia. Founded by the Romans, this city has produced many artists. Among them the abstract expressionist Esteban Vicente, who joined the New York School and has a museum dedicated to his work in Segovia. Palencia, a Castilian city linked to the Spanish master landscape artist Caneja, is where Reguera was raised. From a very young age he has worked in studios in Madrid and Paris with an intense, cosmopolitan calling that has led him to exhibit his work all over the world and to seek inspiration for his interior landscapes in geographies as disparate as ochre Castilian fields, the coasts of Saint-Malo the canals of Amsterdam, and white Norwegian fjords. Always chasing the subtleties of light, and the most delicate shadings of colour, he never loses sight of his vigorous expression, the strength that always sustains a work of real quality.

Once again Reguera is exhibiting in Brussels, one of his preferred settings. Beginning in 1987, he had a number solo exhibitions of his work at the now defunct Ruben Forni At Gallery, has had great successes and garnered the enthusiastic backing of Belgian critics. Articles by Danièle Guillemon in *Le Soir* and Roger Pierre Turine in *La Libre Belgique* and *L'Express* have reflected upon the personal characteristics of Reguera's work, in which landscape and abstraction ally to produce a state of the soul, a magical interpretation of nature and spirituality, and a scale of desires and passions that find their analogy in music. ¹

The collection currently on display at the Pascal Polar gallery consists of more recent paintings from 2000 and early 2001. In them the potency of his lyrical intentionality is not lost despite the great pressure of the material, a distinctive aspect of his work from the beginning. Finishes in metallic, copper and silver tones stand out without abandoning those with the velvety backgrounds that so distinguish his composition. It is a well selected set of pieces, an essential set that contains some of the best moments in his career as if the artist wanted to take advantage of each of these notable discoveries to show us a true panorama of wisdom. He does not give up the sweeps, nor the landscape evocations of the Norway suite, and he dwells energetically on the discovery of these metallic textures that contrast with the magnificent velvet backgrounds. As the critic Rex Weil wrote in the North American journal *Art News* on the occasion of an exhibition of Reguera's work in Washington, they always let in a glimpse of light and are emotionally moving fragments of nature. In this case it is a dreamed nature or imagined landscape as this set is not inspired by a concrete geography as in the past. It is pure painting, deep, intimate painting that speaks of the artist's state of mind that in waking or dreams, conjures these stunning landscapes of the soul for the avid stare of others.

Alberto Reguera is seen in Madrid as the great ambassador of the new Spanish painting, which is more than confirmed now that he is having his seventh individual exhibition, of his best work, in Belgium. With his Prussian and Montserrat blues, solentine reds, lead whites, and chrome oranges and yellows, he has radically renovated the concept of poetic abstraction in Spanish painting, projecting his rigorous

revolution on a European art deeply in need of potent individuals of his ilk. Admired and followed by collectors from Paris, to Lisbon, to Washington, to Amsterdam, and awarded by critics in Spain his ever-evolving work never ceases to surprise with new and energetic twists that leave a clear, coherent mark of his personality.