

Ambivalencias en rojo

Bilal Chahal

August 5 - september 15, 2023.

Opening: august 5, 11 a.m.
Carrera 9 # 73-44 Local 2B

"Color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul."
Vasili Kandinsky.

This is the story of a discovery: the stripping of the mechanisms that make the work of art a way to put another layer on what you don't want to see. How to remove the layers behind which we hide without putting another layer on top of them?

'Ambivalencias en rojo' (Ambivalences in red in English) was born as a search around the burden produced by the overload of information to which we are exposed in the contemporary world. And it is true that in the face of this avalanche we are running out of resources to distinguish what is important from what is not, but what weighs more? the means we use to anesthetize ourselves or what, through these means, we resist to feel?

Art is not a means to explain or expose preconceived truths, but a process of aesthetic investigation that can surprise the artist himself



[Detail] Untitled. Mixed technique on canvas. 2 x 1,20 m. 2023.

with unexpected findings. 'Ambivalencias en rojo' is a series of monochrome paintings in which Chahal, as in previous proposals, works with a mixed technique around the same color, with his own mixture of materials that allows him to explore different textures through layers that are overlaid in various ways. ways, always starting with dark layers that allow those on top to gain intensity and expressiveness. The red, however, caused an additional urgency: that of the darkness struggling to get out. This resulted in small adjacent pieces, which reveal the dark background, like a window that demands to be opened.

The nature of red could have caused this sprain. Perhaps like no other, red is the color of ambivalence: the desire for life and violence, regeneration and destruction. The blood that runs through the veins driven by the heart, is the same that, when spilled, is a sign of death. This ambivalence is what has made red a primordial color in so many cultures: the original, not as what does not previously exist, but as the origin of everything else, what we come from and to which, at the end of everything, we will probably return. Is the story of the boy whose family must flee a country at war after a bomb explodes in his building at the origin? Or is it perhaps the origin that day when his father tries to cut his throat because in his value system does not fit for his son to be homosexual? In Chahal, the origin is always in the present as a chromatic echo that lasts.

Artistic creation puts before our eyes -those of the artist, but also of those who contemplate his work-, what is difficult to see: those dark layers that underlie and pre-exist everything else. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant point out, the color red "is secret, it is the vital mystery hidden at the

bottom of the darkness and the primordial oceans." In the Celtic tradition, this color is associated with warrior druids, that is, spiritual warriors. The warrior archetype embodies ambivalence like no other: the warrior is the one who faces death from his love for life. It is the red of the earth with which the vessel is molded: a container for food, but also for the ashes that remain as traces of our passage on earth.

Owner of a body of work as intense as it is abstract, Chahal has avoided, until now, making direct connections with his personal experience. However, he has not managed to get out of the red unscathed. A series of windows have finally been opened to his childhood, in the midst of the war in Lebanon, and to his adolescence, in confrontation with a tradition from which he cannot escape, but from which, at the same time, he had to escape. In the overlapping of these layers in red, he has found a question about what he refuses to look at in the face, not out of fear or shame, but because, in his ambivalence, he does not allow himself to be fully grasped, he does not allow judgment or judgmental assertion. The windows have been opened.

Liliana Moreno Acevedo
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