

IT'S NOT ONLY WHAT YOU CAN SEE

It's easy to see the things José Antonio Ochoa wants to address, explore and reveal in his pictorial project. It's easy to see the channels connecting cinema and painting, the shared references, the images, the tension between stillness and movement: in short, it's easy to see all the things the series places right in front of us, as if it were trying to say something, suggest something, draw our attention to such a unique, rich relationship between two art forms. Where before there was an easel, now there is a film camera—although the easel is still right there next to it. And there are bridges, many bridges, facilitating dialogue and exchange between the two ways of seeing the world. Painting, for example, in its propensity to adopt the inevitable, heterogeneous narrative dimensions of seriality, approximates cinematographic time, while cinema repays that deference with its capacity to use prolonged still shots, images in which nothing moves.

What isn't so apparent is the attitude, the standpoint underlying any communicative agenda or aspiration: that series of decisions which require no explicit awareness or willpower to take on their full ethical significance. What isn't so apparent is the fact that occupying space and occupying time are two inescapable imperatives that can, however, be interwoven, made to intersect and bonded closely together, for example when a film director's silences and tranquillity manage to open up those mellow, contemplative feelings of detachment that a painter transforms into an inhabitable landscape as he roams the canvas with his eye, his body and his hands.

What isn't so apparent is Ochoa's rejection of jangling sensationalism; the meticulous attention and respect he pays to everything that is only barely perceived by the hasty, all-devouring eye he discreetly criticises for its unbridled, materialistic gluttony. What isn't so apparent is the measured craftsmanship that invites unhurried contemplation, the rhythm marked by the spectator's empathy and reliant on the spectator's patience. Or the artist's indifference to vacuous, so-called "artistic", trends that should ideally be consigned to the ash heap of art history. Or his exaltation of silence—a rare commodity—as an inalienable place of convergence and revelation. Or his respect for the mystery that endures in the distance when we resist that much extolled, generally uncontested temptation to abolish it. Or his silent, firm, calm, graceful defiance which, precisely because it isn't so apparent, draws us towards it, pervades our awareness and earns our gratitude.

José Saborit, May 2018