

## Agustí Puig, 100 engravings by Roma Josep Casamartina

There are two ways to consider engravings: as a process in series, of massification of an original that previously already exists, or as an independent, completed work, the original of which is the self-same work, with the corresponding plate-or plates- and the run. They are two opposing concepts, that coexist under the common denomination of graphic art, but that have nothing to do with each other, neither from the conceptual viewpoint nor, very often, from the technical.

The first is a system of reproduction, more or less routine and mechanical, enriched by the signature of the artist who normally hardly intervenes in the printing process. The second is an artistic media, parallel to painting or drawing, with quite specific techniques and conditions.

The hundred engravings by Agustí Puig, printed by Joan Roma are situated in this second plane. Roma, who grew up amongst books and engravings by Gustave Dore, has approached the work with great care, recuperating techniques that had fallen into disuse, without depreciating the more modern. If necessary he invented new ones, without fear of mixing them all together in one work, in order to achieve the desired result, giving the work the time required, with no fretting or feeling of pressure. It is not a coincidence that his taste in engraving turns around the work of William Blake, Odilon Redon and Hokusai. Although he has given classes for years in the University in Cairo, he has had a workshop in Barcelona with the Japanese artist Takeshi Motomiya.

Together they have worked for Balthus, and normally engrave for Barry Flanagan, Antoni Tápies and, among others, Toni Llena, Perejaume or Agustí Puig.

Almost since he began to paint, in the eighties, Puig showed interest in graphics and produced serigraphs, lithographs, etchings... but it wasn't until he met Joan Roma in 1997 that he initiated a continued coherent, compact production, fruit of the almost perfect symbiosis between the painter and the engraver, with splendid results.

From the collections *Petita* or *Leo*, in 1997, to the refined objectbooks *Estampes japoneses*, in 2001, the excellent *Le nu perdu*, published in 2002 with texts by René Char, which forms one of the most successful pairings.

There is also the work with texts by Antonio Colinas: *Llamadas del más allá*, and individual engravings such as *Personatge negre* and *Cop de taló*, from '99, *Ball espanyol*, from 2002, or *Pol-* and *Dues cares*, from 2003, where the best Agustí Puig can be found, fresh and unrestrained. The simultaneous mix of techniques, and format form part of the success: engravings and watercolours, soft varnishes and carborundums, collages - simple, double or triple-, pochoirs and serigraphs dies and cylinders, come together naturally, happily, without conflicts or misunderstanding. The fact that Puig has been at the same time a good poster maker and designer has, in many aspects, favoured his painting, and above all, his drawing, the indispensable base for engraving. The notebooks, which are rarely exhibited, piled up in the studio full of images, both his own and some borrowed from the patrimony of everyone, are his valuable capital. There are also many plotted projects for imaginary posters and an infinity of scribbles on the computer that are also never seen and are often eliminated, leaving the image only in his head.

Engraving as seen by Roma, is the art of slowness and Puig contraposes the speed and immediacy implicit in him and which are part of his charm. It is also the art of the pulchritude which is confronted by the enormous confusion of the artist's studio. A nervous lump of plaster is converted into a woven thread that, with patience, is placed leaf by leaf until the run is finished; a splash of varnish transformed into an exact, clean collage of Japanese paper, card or rags; and each new engraved piece represents a reflexive process in which the painter reflects by connecting with his own identity to continue his trajectory. If for many artists, graphic works are a system of expansion, almost publicity or commercial work, for Agustí Puig it is the opposite, it means a process of introversion and synthesis.