

## **THREE HOURS FOR A DAY**

**by Franck González**

The exhibition under the title of “Mundos paralelos” (Parallel Worlds) is the first time that the whole of Alfonso Crujera's artistic career has been put on display together, as exemplified in a hundred or so pieces that include sculptures, painting and engravings, key to a vision of his work.

### **OUT OF DARKNESS COMES THE LIGHT**

Alfonso Crujera was barely 17 when he came to live in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in 1968. Scarcely a year later, he founded the Independent Theatre group "La Zapatilla" (The Slipper) together with Alfredo del Pino and Manuel Romero, a venture that lasted through to 1973. In 1974, he began to work on private sessions with Antonio Lázaro and gradually moved into the sphere of work initiated by Juan Hidalgo (and where Antonio Zaya and Fernando Álamo also collaborated) that was to have its major repercussions in the «Mini Concierto Zaj» celebrated in the Gallery Vegueta in September and October, 1978.

In March 1975, Crujera, Alfredo del Pino and José Carlos Suárez embarked on a series of theatre performances, over twenty, under the banner of UG MOTIVACIONES in the Coffee-Theatre Los Ángeles, the Ugente in Cebrián, previously known as the Tahor, and the gallery Vegueta, the most belligerently vanguard places in Gran Canaria at the time. The group broke up and Crujera went on to produce his "happening" «Haga con ella lo que quiera» (Do what you will with it) that included Ángel Sánchez presenting his visual poetry *Logística del Tapir* (The Logistics of the Tapir) and the philosopher Juan Ezequiel Morales with his text *Consideraciones apriorísticas* (A priori considerations). All of these active artistic proposals that are not necessarily represented in this exhibition are key to an understanding of the essence of Crujera's creative process, in that they represent his first artistic stance in the world.

Crujera overviewed the whole of his context in the world and aligned doses of social discourse, as many other artists of his times felt the urgent need to do, with a new language that marked a clean break with the visual cannons in Spain up until then. This can be seen clearly in the series that opens the exhibition, “Desde el hombre para el hombre”(1974) (From Man for Man). This is one of his reinterpretations of the human landscape in a political key that should be translated within the context of all of his production at the time, within the last dying breaths of Franco's dictatorship in Spain. Human figures are still the necessary reference and the starting-point for all reflexion. But these figures have been passed through a filter and are presented in the reds, blacks and whites of Millares and the Resistance, tied up to other symbolic and signifying forms such as cartoons, ropes... At that time, everything was still binary, with no shadows as yet. The light had not yet come up completely over the horizon.

### **LIGHT ON HIGH**

The series “Desde el hombre para el hombre” (From Man for Man) that opens this magnificent exhibition curated by Antonio P. Martín, affords us a first

glimpse of an essential part of Crujera's work: his return time and time again to the roots, to the origins, to the grounding principles of territory. His *Tríptico de iniciación* (1978) (Triptych of Initiation) already indicated his first attempts at a new kind of landscape painting in 1980. Alfonso in this was no different from many other artists of his generation, once their rebellious political activism dissolved in the face of the new institutions forged in the democracy. There was a need felt to bridge the 40 year void of the dictatorship and link artistic creativity into the island Vanguard movements of the Second Republic, an artistic "return" to the Island. This gave rise to a critical process working from the democratic institutions of the 80s, a process in which some artists are still immersed.

The series "Aras" (1981) (Altars) gave formal vision to his first perspective on sacred subjects that carried through to the series "Betilos" (1988-1998) (Standing Stones). Both of these leitmotifs in his work, investigation of all that is sacred and the roots of territory, came together a year later in the series "Tools", that itself represents a prologue for his most important work, "Strand" (1990).

Crujera's work grew in depth and intensity over a decade. He worked on symbols, polishing them, and began to experiment with colour. However, Crujera always returned to the roots, to base. Literally. Seeing but half the world in light with the sun at ninety degrees, as Galileo would say. And with a perspective of ninety degrees over the horizontal, at right angles to the earth, as the poem says. There are profiles of sacred stones such as the monoliths and the altars, and the walls of buildings from other forgotten civilisations, seen from on high. He digs into these civilisations and brings to the surface all types of terracotta three-dimensional structures that he calls "Obra solar" (1992) (Solar works). Ruins and times gone by are used as a pretext to dig into, investigate and extract the main symbols, giving rise to the wind from the North in *Aquilón* (1991), droughts in *Torre de Vriitra* (1991) and the journey of no return, *Disco Solar V* (1992). Crujera at his zenith.

## **AFTER LIGHT, DARKNESS**

In the 21st century, Crujera has centred his work on engraving and etchings, after producing his first electro-etchings in 2001. He began to focus his etchings from 2002 on the landscape of Punta del Caletón, and presented his first series of paintings and etchings as a result under the title of "Las Palmas de Gran Canaria" in 2007. This is a re-re-interpretation of territory and the void, a relationship that is central to his work, where the city and the space upon which it is anchored are represented like a stage decoration, as a backdrop upon which to play a series of lights and shadows. Like a pop-up book or a postcard, the memory of a skyline as you make your way home.

A year later, he was to publish his Electro-etching handbook in Spanish with the English version published five years later in 2013, that has since become the reference book on the subject. This technique has brought to light the series known as "Galvanografías" (Galvanographs) and "Grabatos para pasar las horas" (Doodled Etchings as pastimes), both from the period between 2008-2019.

The exhibition's closing elements exemplify Crujera's most recent reflexions on territory and sacred things, the series of canvases called "Sacred Place" (2020).