

Jose Bonell

He soñado tanto que ya no soy de aquí

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"I have dreamed so much, so much, that I no longer belong here." With this verse by Léon-Paul Fargue as a threshold, we delve into the pictorial universe of Jose Bonell, a territory where the border between wakefulness and dream vanishes to reveal a cartography of our strange contemporaneity. The artist's first exhibition in Mexico is an immersion into that intermediate space, that of the sleepwalker, whose lucid wandering serves as a metaphor to explore the relationship between hyperconnection and inactivity, between fatigue and hallucination.

Born in Barcelona in 1989, Jose Bonell emerges from a singularly complex context for a painter. The Catalan art scene, marked by the monumental legacy of pictorial avant-gardes —Picasso, Miró, Dalí—, lived for decades a reaction that tended to relegate painting to a secondary role, considering it an anachronistic or outdated medium compared to more conceptual practices. In this environment, Bonell's commitment to figuration and pictorial language is not a nostalgic gesture, but an act of brave and contemporary affirmation. His rapid insertion into the international circuit, with exhibitions in Paris, New York, and Los Angeles, demonstrates the strength of a proposal that, without denying its heritage, reclaims the relevance of painting to interrogate our present.

Bonell's work is articulated as a theater of the unusual. His canvases are stages where the everyday is interrupted by apparitions that alter the logic of daily life. To construct these scenes, Bonell uses a repertoire of objects charged with a strange familiarity: pillows floating in a night sky like drifting ships, pajamas that become abstract landscapes of folds and drips, or hands that, with pearly nails, project shadow puppets that seem to take on a life of their own and become threatening.

More than simple objects, they are whispered clues, the vestiges of a story that the viewer is invited to imagine. In this sense, his painting dialogues with the heritage of a metaphysical surrealism. If René Magritte challenged the perception of reality through the precise representation of the impossible, Bonell uses a more fluid and gestural brushstroke to present scenes that are, above all, visual enigmas. He does not seek the certainty of a symbol, but the resonance of an atmosphere. In his paintings, as in those of Joan Miró, there is an exploration of the subconscious and the dreamlike, a language that emerges from the freedom of imagination to create a world with its own rules.

The artist starts from a critical reflection on our time, that factory of wakefulness mentioned by Nietzsche and updated by Bonell. In an era of optimization and performance, sleep has been stripped of its revealing power to become pure hygiene of efficiency. Faced with this imperative, the figure of the insomniac stands as a resistor. But what happens when rest is impossible? Bonell shows us that "it is here, succumbed to extreme fatigue, where his habitat is transformed by hallucination (understood here as the oneirism of wakefulness)." Imagination then becomes a tool of disobedience.

This tension manifests itself in the dialectic between light and shadow. In Bonell's work, shadow is not the absence of light, but an active presence, an autonomous character, a memory and presence of sleepless time. Light, on the contrary, often appears as a blinding flash or a multitude of small wandering glints, as we see in a canvas that evokes a firmament of luminous spermatozoa or lost fireflies. A paradigmatic example of this struggle is the work where a figure, dressed in ghostly brushstroke pajamas, emerges from the gloom.

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His face has been replaced by a sphere of blinding white light, a kind of lightbulb-head that radiates a painful luminosity. A hand is raised, not to protect itself from the light, but in an ambiguous gesture, almost an offering of its own luminous torture. Here the metaphor of insomnia as a "luminous headache" materializes, where mental hyperactivation becomes a source of torment that erases identity. As Roberto Juarroz —a poet admired by Bonell and a great inspiration for the exhibition— says, "The night gets dirty with an unexpected substance. / It doesn't get darker: it gets dirty. / Light is also a stain."

The arrival of this exhibition in Mexico is not a coincidence, but a happy synchronicity. It lands in a scene that, after the monumental heritage of the muralists, is experiencing today an extraordinary resurgence of painting, a return to the medium full of vigor and new proposals. Jose Bonell's work, therefore, is not an escape to a world of dreams, but a confrontation with reality through estrangement. It places us in that liminal place mentioned in the title, that of someone who has dreamed so much that they no longer entirely belong to consensual reality. And in doing so, his painting, born of a resistance in Barcelona, enters into a vibrant dialogue with Mexico's pictorial renewal, demonstrating that, on both sides of the Atlantic, painting continues to be one of the most powerful ways to think about the world.

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