

I do not know how Keka Ruiz-Tagle has managed to penetrate, as deeply as she has, a world so foreign to the cultural context in which we, human beings of this time and age live immersed, as is the case of her current work of art, strongly related to the aesthetics of ancestral indigenous peoples of America.

It gives the impression that it was this “other” world, in the deepest sense of the word that sought our artist, to emerge in this modernity, before she even made a conscious effort to search for it, to find within it the formal and symbolical drivers of her creations.

The process through which she adopted the aesthetics, the poetry and wisdom of our Aboriginal ancestors of Andean America as her own is a psychological phenomenon transcending the domain of the individual; it is the emergence of the collective unconscious. Similar to what happened to the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky who, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, felt possessed by the imperative need to adapt his music to the prehistoric ritual rhythms of Eastern Europe, which he had steadfastly pursued and resulted in Stravinsky’s famous composition *The Rite of Spring*.

The person who is writing these lines, has had quite a similar experience, one that spiritually connected him to the Mapuche people, to their wisdom and their art, so when the undersigned states that these Aboriginal Americans were looking for an artist called Keka Ruiz-Tagle, he knows what he is talking about.

In her art, the return to the symbolical forms of the human figure has a purpose that is sometimes unknown to the author himself, as can be perceived in the latter phase of her art in particular, that is, in the field of ceramics. Because the option of reproducing a human face just as it is, as is the case of any portrait of the European 15th Century, implies a model of society that encourages the development of a thinking and deliberative individuality, while the symbolic form of a face, looking at us impersonally for many centuries and millennia, is the trace left on the plastic matter of the notion of a man, of an entire human community in which everyone cooperates towards the common good, in a social order that attempts not to alter the fundamental equality of its structure.

Keka Ruiz-Tagle began her creative endeavor in painting, but she consolidated her art in ceramics, in which you can perceive a curious alliance between the human figure and basic volumes, reminiscent of masses sprouting from rocks, vegetation or human body trunks. It becomes clear however that this is not an imitation of pre-Columbian ceramics, which is ceremonial yet utilitarian, though some of her works are, indeed, vases.

In her explanatory writings, she provides a testimony of her conscious purpose in impregnating all of her works with the spiritual fluid that emanates from shamanic ceremonials. She seeks the assistance of spirits of the elements, according to the ancestral system of beliefs of the Andean Cultures. But since the artistic outcome of this rather complex, to a certain extent “magical” thought is an authentic creation, everything that in the past was considered indigenous art becomes the implicit background, more as an irradiating presence than as a continuity of the same formal treatment.

These figures of ceramic art impose themselves in their presence. In them there is a sober and spontaneous religious recollection, but one that is translated into an overpowering solemnity. An art that takes part in the solemnity of every authentic archaic art, while still being an art that emerges in the cultural context of the modern West.

It would appear as if the presence of these figures, somewhere between the human and the elementary, between the human and the luminous, could not be integrated within a series of other objects to become part of an inhabited public and private space, for they convey an earnestness that, inevitably, remits towards the transcendental. Their presence in the human environment could not be anything but akin to the guardian spirit of our household.

The artist has been wise enough to choose the vivid colors of what millennia of time have left in their present matter, for these images of those who resemble our most remote ancestors, without excluding the tonal variations of chromatic degradation itself; stains of humid or oily texture, in flagrant contrast between what appears to be contemporary and what, apparently, the centuries have erased or superimposed, all of this with such a natural look, as if they were not created by an artist of the industrial era! All of this gives Keka Ruiz-Tagle's works the character of a transference, for they are a reappearance of what we humans were, back in the times in which we knew how to inhabit the Earth.

This properly integrated symbiosis of faces and hands, that is: conscience and action, with the volumes of natural matter in which they are inserted, they bring us back to the famous myth of the first man, whose body was sculpted in clay, but in whose face the light of a soul was lit by the Spirit being breathed in.

This spiritual breath is the most powerful imponderable of this community of beings, giving us the impression they had never been expelled from the original garden of Earth.

Gastón Soublette

