

Illustration

ALEJANDRO DUFORT
(ARGENTINE CONTEMPORARY PLASTIC ARTIST)

Mural painting is an account of existential freedom born as the first artistic expression of man. Its earliest finding Chauvet-Pont D'Arc, discovered in 1994, is the work of a major artist. All the subsequent developments of visual arts are present in that cave on the slope of the Ardèche River (French Alps), which was used as an atelier 32,000 years ago.

Muralist Alejandro Dufort embodies the legacy of the existential cry over its executioner, time. By 1930 muralism is reborn with unflagging verve in post-revolutionary Mexico with its indigenous character destined to socialize art. It takes the aspect of another freedom, no longer trying to document human presence, but that of the socialized individual. In this conformation it moves away from the academicism and the bourgeois domains to return to popular vindications, the workers and peasants; concepts coined by David Siqueiros, Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera. Dufort today struggles with his art for the historical recognition of his ancestors, the Comechingón Indians.

The artist is passionate when talking about muralism. He finds in the monumentality and poliangularity of this art the historical narrative designed for a sociocultural transmission. In his work the indigenous character reveals an act of rebellion against the forgetfulness incurred by the pro-European civilization that conquered this land.

- *My pictorial narrative is the essence of the comechingón, of my origins.*

- *I perceive expression of freedom...*

- *Yes, freedom and fatherland. My people had a culture in the Sierras Pampeanas, forgotten by a genocidal progress where the tale concealed the true extent of the tragedy of a group of human beings.*

- *Alejandro, this has been the result of Illuminism which saves the core and disregards the periphery, where reason is not pondered, but enforced. The reason is that of power. Hegel's Master and Slave and the class struggle perpetuate. Human condition gives man new pagan gods.*

- *History is the repetitive pattern of man's roaming*

- *The oblivion of the people who populated the American territory was formalized by a bourgeois culture that finally imposed itself over the native, territorial character, situation expressed by Ponciano Cardenas with his "America is pain, not color."*

Then his words rushed and his eyes became livelier. His hands, with vigorous movements, simulated



"My Roots"
Mural



"Freedom and Fatherland"
Mural

being on top of a wall. - *Historical experience is regressive. Thereupon man ventures his future praxis. The first experience is an abstract position to advance on the reality that awaits him. He assumes it and becomes alienated; then he conjures. This demonstrates that the project of human consciousness is freedom.*

- *Alejandro, does your technique get you closer to the origin of art when the anonymous Paleolithic men in the cave paintings were barely preparing the rocks*

by scraping them free of debris and impurities?

- Actually I am interested in working the wall as virgin as possible ... but of course ... we have other possibilities regarding materials and effects that give certain magic to the sight, as well as preventing exposure to the environment from damaging the work.

- In this regard, when Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel, while creating the "Flood" at the beginning of the work he thought at first he had failed because he found on the first paintings a spread of the colors and a mold that had ruined the mural. In desperation he personally went to see Pope Julius II to declare that he had failed, a pain that was increased as it would produce Bramante's boasting, who had labeled Michelangelo's project as shameless and chaotic. The Pope sent Sangallo to inspect the work and he arrived to the conclusion that the problem was the different composition of the Roman lime made of "travertine", instead of "pozzolana", used by Michelangelo in Ghirlandajo's Florentine atelier. The informant's advice "Use less water with this lime. Your colors will not suffer" was enough to correct the defect.

- I try the work to offer public exposure and to have popular significance with the purpose of reaching the historicity sought by the first art of man.

GAINING FREEDOM MAY CONSTITUTE A SOCIAL RISK. LOSING IT IS A DISASTER

Like our first ancestors, every man still keeps asking about God, death and freedom. God is no problem for our level of rational consciousness. Helies on its negative side where unreachable things dwell. Death is time, the irrevocable executioner, binding to the concept of God in that consciousness void. Man has the freedom to surpass himself, a faculty torn between two limits: origin and death.

Freedom of consciousness is conditioned by the object. Given this, man starts his decision; therefore consciousness is a participant of the cosmic experiment. From awareness emanates praxis. Dialectic is the materialization of consciousness, of freedom. Of his being thrown into the world. Man is a project of freedom not conditioned by any significance, neither in his natural self nor in that of being man. There is no determination in the cumulative history of man; therefore his goal is to stay. His nature as superior or eminent being is just the continuity that defeats his own temporality. This is history's lesson, which lacks meaning.

To what extent can a society achieve a totalizing action without violating individual freedom? Is it possible that man with his actual level of consciousness may reach the balance between that totalizing action and each subject's individuality? Fear keeps the total-

izing action against the freedom to which man turns to in his detotalizing impulse. All power mortgages freedom. This leads to cynicism against someone else's opportunity, or to totalitarian violence to oppose freedom's disruptive power. Each social power creates its own totalitarianism. Man sides with power, just as consciousness does with the ego. Fear decides against individual freedom to keep the community handcuffed, without risk for power. In all its aspects, human freedom is a scourge to the systems.

The role of a subject within the whole society conspires against his freedom. And this is the crucial point of all gregarious systems: the great freedom / society alienation, because freedom is a personal valuation that reflects individual profound reasons of self-consciousness. Of his guilt and cravings. Of his ethics and morality. Of society itself to tolerate the individual, his freedom. How far? To what extent of individual freedom is the whole society protected? Conversely, society confronts and punishes individual freedom. This crucial point turns a fair society utopic. The political society is a major power group-albeit not in number, but in interests- capable of enforcing its orders by the power it brandishes. Every human political system tends to totalitarianism; if it were not so, it would undermine its own bases of legitimacy. The truly free man is a lone man. Sartre approaches the accessibility of individual freedom within a totalizing society to consciousness fulfillment. Its fall to instinct or its moral and ethical spiritual soaring depends on it. And this is not a social behavior, beyond culture, it is a personal act still misunderstood even by the subject himself.

Being a man is not only a social function. The need for this social function restrains the individual. It makes freedom / group reconciliation incompatible. Man usually accommodates himself to this circumstance: Tolerates to survive. Accepts to mortgage his freedom out of fear. Giving up this freedom is the price. He is guided by his alienation where mundane existence runs, wasting his redeemed free nature, his most prized condition.

Dufort highlights harmony in his work with the exaltation of historical-existential reality in a communion of formal and real art. Formalism is the historical silence depicted in his painting; realism is the interpretation and unpredictability of the historical content. In that hidden cry lies the artist's pictorial language to express its creation, though this style can confront with the prejudices of the time, aware of what Flaubert expressed, "In art there must be no fear of being exaggerated, but this exaggeration must be continuous and proportional to it".

Jorge C. Trainini