

Are those ice creams or mountains?

Exhibition of paintings by Aldo Urbano
in collaboration with Ángel Ruiz

Curated by Caterina Almirall

19 September - 22 November 2015
La Puntual - Sant Cugat del Vallès
Barcelona

The candy's painter

When Aldo and Ángel first met, the second one was selling a Calippo to the first one. Aldo, who is a very awake person, immediately grasped that there was something not fitting in the humble establishment where he was buying the Calippo. With a quick glance he found out what it was. Under the counter was hiding a colorful sheet, pencils, brushes and gouache colors. He asked curious what it was, and immediately Ángel told him that it was the last painting he was working on: a copy of a painting of Henri Rousseau.

"Ángel is a painter disguised as a salesman on a small candy store next to the art factory where I work", Aldo says, "he paints constantly while he dispatches, and when he shows his work, he mix the illusion with unpretentious apologies 'because nobody has never taught him.' "

Not only under the counter, also on the walls Ángel take advantage of every gap between the shelves and the boxes full of sweets to hang the pictures he makes. Even in the bars nearby, where he is equally generous and famous, his works can be seen. His shop is both workshop, exhibition space and meeting place. There are always friends and family chatting, playing parchís, listening to the radio. Aldo was captivated by the frenetic activity that took place on the store. Now he is going often, not only to buy a bottle of water or a soda, but to seek inspiration. He goes for a visit and while eating some sweets that make him remember when he was a child, Ángel shows his most recent paintings. One day Ángel showed some paintings that were different from what he had seen before, telling that these were on "naive style". Little landscapes and folkloric scenes. Memories of Ángel when he was a child, and lived in a small village in the south, in a Civil Guard barracks. Memories embellished by vivid colors and careful brush strokes.

Aldo talks about Ángel with fascination. He explained that he had met the 'the candy's painter'. "When I got older I want to be like him," he says, "I want to paint the candies." But if you think better, which of them two is actually 'the candy's painter'?

The amateur painter

What one painter admires from the other is the apparent freedom he has -the freedom of who stays on the margin-. He admires how the other can be sentimental, boring, corny, epic, or ridiculous, depending on the day and mostly in an unconscious way. Also, and especially, the apparent lack of interest in success. We could even say that it

represents a kind of romantic hero, a character who ignores convention, and basically does what pleases to him. The 'amateur' painter seeks the "pleasure of painting." Pleasure that he finds in the artisanal reproduction of an image. This pleasure not necessarily includes seeking a greater virtuosity, or a technical improvement. Although sometimes can be only and all about this technique. The "pleasure" lies in the reproduction of an image that is painted because it looks nice, without needing to be justified. After all, the painter paints by himself, without the need to please others and avoiding others judgment.

In the paintings we call 'naive' there is often a sentimental wish. This is "the enigma of his reasons for painting, which are the same as anyone who keeps a big secret in which he works hard. Shaping a vision sights, keep amused on remembering..." said Aldo. The attempt to catch a piece of the own biography, capture a memory, or even change the past with an slightly retouched image. This is a hobby among those artists who settled Sundays on the sun to paint a bucolic landscape, a vase of flowers, a photograph of his niece, or to copy for the umpteenth time the poor Rousseau. Rewrite the history of art and with its practice, reinscribe images or gestures on the visual culture they are part of.

But above all, draw a line that separates the "professional" world from which is not. They describe the perimeter of the 'art world', to disappear, along with all practices considered "outsiders", on the other side.

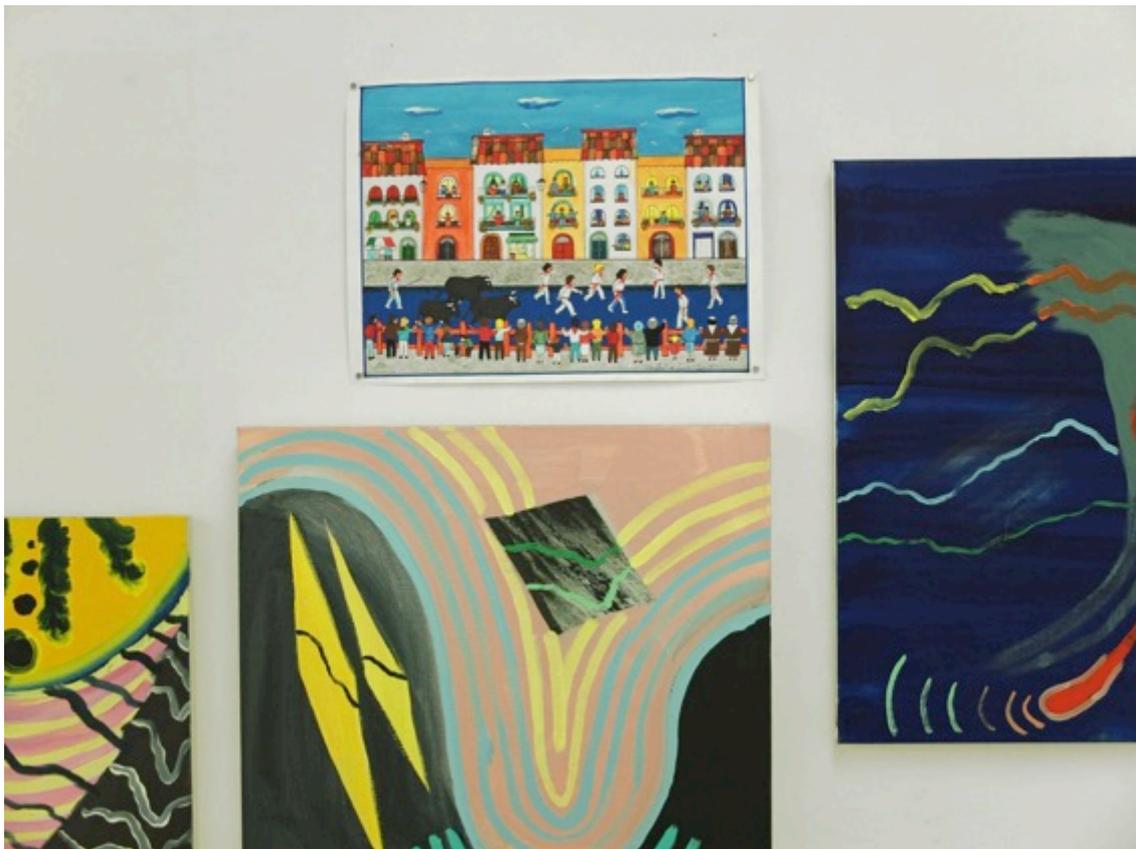
The abyss

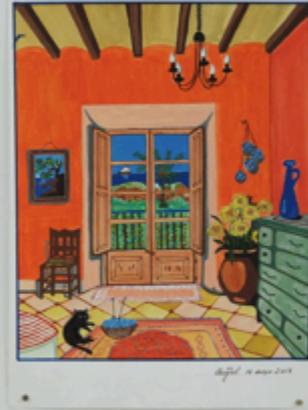
With this story we question the social and cultural structures naturalized and universalized to destabilize the constructs that serve as conventions to relate. We investigate the boundaries between inside and outside of these structures, based on specific elements that a priori appear as antagonistic, as the dichotomy professional/amateur. What is the difference between an amateur painter and a professional one? What they have in common? What if we stopped to compare them and simply melt them? What happens with contemporary art if we introduce what initially had been banished? And moreover, what we get if we add to the institutionalized gaze what does not belong to it?

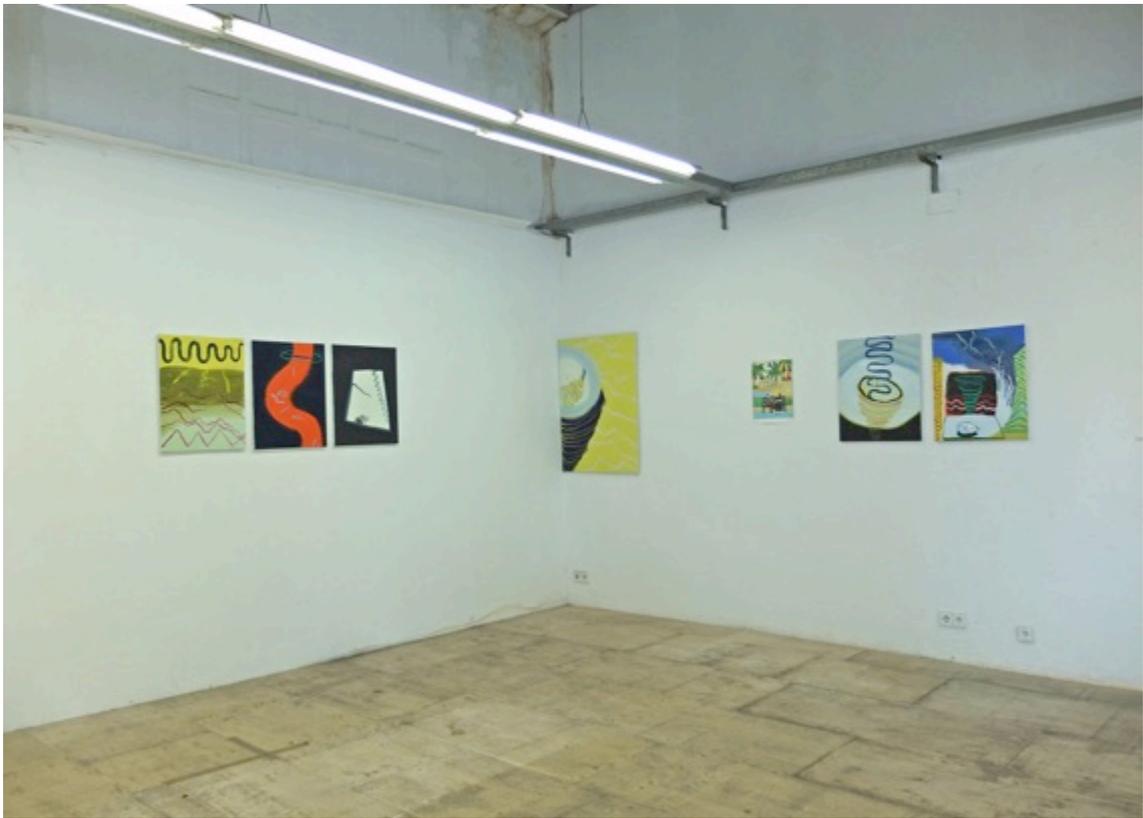
The concept of inside and outside, the "art world" and the outsider, a professional and an amateur, wild and civilization, nature and culture, draws a situation where pairings are required to describe things itself. This situation reflects a particular system of modern and Eurocentric thought, where we define ourselves in terms of the other. Santos da Souza talks about western abysmal thought, whom universalize their criteria in detriment of forms of knowledge "others" which are relegated to the plane of superstition, mysticism, magic, heresy...

In the logic of abysmal thinking, ways of understanding the other side of the line disappear as reality. With their exclusion they hide the line itself, and make the prevailing thought proclaimed himself as universal in the lack of other possibilities. Bringing out this line should enable the co-presence of different forms of knowledge or artistic creation. Deleting this line would eliminate the dichotomy as a constant way to create entities of meaning. Paraphrasing the philosopher Agamben, being a contemporary means the coexistence of different times. It implies the impossibility of the present, and by this, the impossibility of being present. We perceive events with a delay, or in advanced. This line is an event hiding among the darkness of our own contemporary creation.

This is the line that separates ice creams and mountains. It separates what is intelligible to our codes, from which is obsolete, distant, strange, other. It separates the painting we see, from the object to which we attribute magical powers that we cannot explain. The power of the object, of the picture, lies in the faith we place to his magical capacity. This line is separating the things from his secret name. If things have a secret name. If painting memories Ángel rewrite the past, and copying Rousseau rewrite art history; Aldo generates scenes in which lies a near danger, series of strange ice cream-mountain events and talks, precisely, of the possibility of such powers. Both powers are magical, if we believe in them.







Aldo Urbano (Palau de Plegamans, 1991) graduated in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona and the Willem de Kooning Academy (Holland). He has shown his work individually in *Gran Muelle* (el Passadís, Barcelona 2015) and in group exhibitions as *Art>30* (Galeria Trama, 2013), *The Visit* (Wdka, Holland 2012), as well as in self-sustained festivals as *Plaga* (Barcelona, 2014) *Llucifest* (Masnou, 2014). He participated in the Sandarbh Artistic Residency (India, 2014) and received the Guasch Coranty Grant 2013-2014. He is currently residing in the Rocaumbert art factory in Granollers. Soon he will participate in the SWAB Art Fair Barcelona with Gallery Fidel Balaguer.

Caterina Almirall Rotés (Sant Cugat del Vallès, 1986), Bachelor in Fine Arts and Master in Arts and Education. Directs a self-managed space located in Barcelona, el Passadís, where she organizes exhibitions and activities. He has developed several curatorial projects in Terrassa, in Barcelona-EART, in Blue Project Foundation, or the Artistic Circle of St. Lluç. Is part of the group Supterranis, organizers of Plaga Festival. Also she writes art critic for the magazine A*Desk and teaches in courses and workshops of contemporary art.

She has worked in art books projects such as *La Mola!* (with Guim Camps, 2015) *Los rechazados* (with Antonia del Rio and Miguel Garcia, Sala d'Art Jove, Barcelona - La Panera, Lleida, 2014). She received the Fellowship 'mediation in residence' in Sala d'Art Jove this year, and the grant in 'Edition' in the same institution past year, also the OSICS Price, 2014. He had a residency in Nau Estruch (Sabadell) 2015, with the project *Speaking Tables*. Currently enjoying a Goethe Institute scholarship for cultural agents, and along with Daniel Moreno develops a project in Unzip in Prat del Llobregat.