

juan hidalgo: a way of looking, desire, the world, resolve

Jorge Contreras

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A way of looking

*And... What else? What else is there besides breathing?*¹

Being on this world to live is not enough. One must put oneself on the line through a particular way of acting; and through a particular way of doing things, to explore the conditions that sow the seeds of our desire and our hunger. Perceiving is the source of our anguishes and our pleasures; breathing is acting out the motives of what we do, and feeling is a way of looking at the world that we bring up with each gesture.

The work of Juan Hidalgo puts on the line a way of looking that directs our attention not to the presence of things and their potential reference, but to their absence – it gives rise to another world that is sensed through difference, through the fracture of aesthetic gestures, perhaps this is why this kind of art is so necessary to us each and every minute.

Juan Hidalgo's oeuvre renews a world that does not resemble a machine in the least; that increasingly resembles a thought, a poem whose subject is desire; and a musical composition that cracks the solidity of silence with the serenity and joy of being alive. A way of looking at things that is built up as a process rather than a fact, as a fluid itinerary that reinvents space giving rise to emotions and passions; a way of looking in which the subjects are not the agents but the recipients that compassionately resist their own gaze.

A way of looking through which the world and each object are power and time is simultaneous; a way of looking that is like the sense of encounter and separation between what is seen and what sees, a way of looking that removes presence, that subtracts from that which is present and insinuates other forms of life through that which is absent.

A way of looking that points to an intention but not to a collection, that passes over things without fully grasping them in their totality, like an infinite look that is potentially there but cannot be made over completely, a way of looking that is, in itself, its own end.

Thus, the world of Juan Hidalgo is product of the wonderment that results from seeing something visible appear, the wonderment of sight,

¹ Juan Hidalgo, fragment from "Cage, una jaula sin barrotes", text published in *Diario 16* on September 13, 1987, and reproduced in the catalogue *De Juan Hidalgo 1957-1997*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1997, p. 148.

touch, smell, taste, sound; the wonderment of presence; it is not a world in which one inhabits but a world towards which one tends (*tendere*), a world set in motion through the effect of words, sounds and actions.

His world is also one of endless desire –it is a way of looking that is passionate– in which looking is seeing your reflection in a mirror and noticing that the desire you feel is a desire for yourself, for sharing with others the limits of your desire and finding in other bodies the sensitive potential of your own body.

Desire

- *Oh, no! On the contrary, I'm pleased to show you my big cock too.*²

Desire is to the work of Juan Hidalgo what a cape is to a vampire: its shadow and its cover. And his work, simultaneously, reiterates that presence is first desire, that living is a state of being, that objects are power and purpose, and that meaning is desire; in this way, his works play with the history of art and of aesthetic forms but paint a history of the forms of sensitivity.

In the intrigue created by desire, the exploration of Juan Hidalgo gives rise to unprecedented modalities. Moving across a body (*Man, woman and hand*) with painstaking care in order to dialogue with desire, showing a skin that has been touched slowly and in all its sensitive zones, balancing desire. His exploration proposes silence, planting the skin with words and sounds, with the serenity that strengthens resolve, with the decisiveness that is granted by desire.

This way of exploring desire opens the world, touches it in another dimension, offers new forms of sexual desire and eroticism without the dearth of consensus. The pleasure of an exploration that accepts the imperfection of the world and of the body is stronger than the disagreement of orthodox forms, accepting that disagreement over the years implies a resolve to understand the human with compassion. *Around the... [penis]. Narcissus (Eros and Thanatos)*. Thus, even if I came upon the works of Juan Hidalgo in the solitude of a site stripped bare of references, I would also find all of mankind adhered to its bones.

The relationship between what is left unspoken, to which his works allude, and the renewal of a reference builds up a syntax of a way of looking called Juan Hidalgo, a syntax whose rhetoric is the strategy of desire; a rhetoric whose semantics creates new links between objects and concretises new relationships with others, even with oneself as another; a rhetoric that transforms the person who desires into his own desire. *Around the... [penis]. Narcissus (legs)*. Eroticism and sex for the

² Juan Hidalgo, fragment of the text published in the catalogue *De Juan Hidalgo 1957-1997*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1997, p. 162.

mere joy of being alive, sex for the mere price of being alive, no secrets, skin is different depending on where it is found, and the hairs, slow garbage collectors.

The world

Art is the continuous orgasm of intelligence³

Suppose we look for ways to dissolve our attachment to the existence of phenomena but find perception and, with it, time. Suppose we try to dissolve the centuries and clarify touch but find hunger and desire. Suppose an artist (a look and a body, and an ear, and a touch, and a smell, and a penis) called Juan Hidalgo admits to playing under these conditions, and to enjoying the game; the result is a world that is not Cartesian, not encompassing, but ductile, a world that shows its own flesh, that is always moving away, crossed by internal horizons, that can only be seen through its cracks and that can only be accessed through feelings, through the strategies of desire.

Think of a world where desire shapes the look and the resolve that carry the temporal name of Juan Hidalgo, think of a sensitivity that is called Juan Hidalgo and that spells out three verses of the poem of the world that is drawing near; think of a body, naturally Juan Hidalgo, that invents variations of sensitivity to talk of that which drives life.

Believe in the gestures and actions of an artist called Juan Hidalgo that imbue with new meaning the objects of a world that remains beyond reach but that can be sensed, believe in that world as the configuration of desire. Believe in the world of Juan Hidalgo in which light and sound share with resolve the desire for a body and for the capacity to feel.

Invent, like Juan Hidalgo, a use for objects that alters their condition as signs and produces new configurations of sensitivity: invent sights that make it possible to access not what the world is but what is missing, the void; invent the imperfection that gives rise to discourses, invent ways of living the power of your own desire.

Resolve

*Art is like being at home on a Sunday morning
in sandals, shorts and a T-shirt⁴*

The sort of presence that the work of Juan Hidalgo brings into play is never saturated; it consists of the relinquishment of references and the

³ Juan Hidalgo, fragment of the text published in the catalogue *De Juan Hidalgo 1957-1997*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1997, p. 217.

⁴ Juan Hidalgo, fragment of the text published in the catalogue *De Juan Hidalgo 1957-1997*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Ayuntamiento de Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1997, p. 217.

indifference to the existence of phenomena, in a way of inhabiting silence through the transformation of suffering and anguish into desire.

Juan Hidalgo's desire finds, in the middle of the trap that is hunger, a gap through which to slip freedom and a presence that is at once light and profound (*The light in the eyes*, 1986), a presence that infects the objects which form part of his works, that liberates them from their references, from their contexts, from their familiarity. A presence that pays attention to both the objects and the relationship between those they name at the same time.

By virtue of the complicity of Juan Hidalgo, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Oaxaca can continue its reflection on art as a way of life – it has the good fortune to present the kind of presence which the work of Juan Hidalgo brings up since it acts as an antidote against lethargy and unhappiness.