

Exhibition 5 November 2014 - 5 January 2015
Sabatini Building. 3rd Floor

Patricia Gadea

Atomic-Circus



Patricia Gadea,
Ritmo del mundo
(Rhythm of the World),
1984. Acrylic on canvas,
200 x 250 cm
Private Collection

I'm attracted by the luminous colors of slot machines. I'm fascinated by the wrappings on oranges, the back covers of books, advertisements for lighters. [...] All these things are like still lifes that have come to take the place of the old ones. I dive in among them to find new pictorial resources. [...] I'm unable to exclude any ingredient from this cocktail. I see painting as a minefield. I like the sensation of the moment, the risk implicit in my own story, where the complex can become very simple. I like ironizing about different languages and dislocated images.

Patricia Gadea

Patricia Gadea (1960-2006) occupies a central place in the renewal of Spanish painting in the eighties and nineties, to which she contributed a new critical iconography. *Atomic-Circus* is the first retrospective devoted to the work of an artist who forged a visual universe that was both personal and collective, immediate yet complex, feeding off popular culture in order to reflect on her own time.

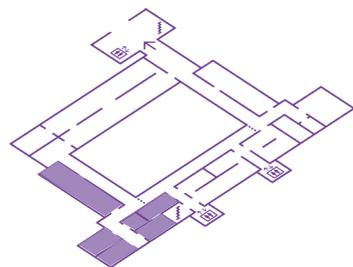
Her painting emerges in the euphoric context of the restoration of liberties after Franco's dictatorship. In the atmosphere of enthusiasm that accompanied the wave of cultural ferment in Madrid known as '*la movida*', her work was quickly seen as linked to new figuration, which encompassed the work of various artists centered on the dazzling visual paradoxes of the painting of Luis Gordillo. Gadea used the technique of collage as a way of appropriating elements from the Spanish comic *TBO*. Parading through her painting, though altered and bearing new messages, are characters familiar to several generations, sometimes combined with images taken from graphic advertising. Feminist elements frequently appear, revealing how the traditional patriarchal order that sustained late Francoism and post-Francoism made use of popular culture to maintain the status quo. Moreover, Gadea's interest in humorous sections like *Los grandes inventos de TBO* (*TBO's Great Inventions*) situates her work close to Dadaist strategies, reflecting her mistrust of a society based on developmentalism.

Settling in New York in the second half of the eighties, she formed the Estrujenbank group together with her partner Juan Ugalde, also a painter, and the poet Dionisio Cañas. This collaboration led to a progressive politicization of her painting, especially after her return to Spain in 1989. From that point, with her *Serie Circo* (*Circus Series*), her work acquires a notably iconoclastic tone infused with melancholy agitation. Gadea thus displays her resistance to a contemporary scene whose cultural players are placed at the service of the festivities of 1992 (the Barcelona Olympics, Expo '92 in Seville, and Madrid's designation as European Cultural Capital), the events which supposedly certified Spain's position in the new global order. The circus becomes a metaphor for the lukewarm enthusiasm pervading Spanish society, a sarcastic denunciation of a model for promoting the image of the country, and an expression of disenchantment at the results of the process of democratization. She therefore uses the easily recognized logos of political parties, and banishes all forms of self-censorship in her caricatures of the figures who govern us.

The last period in Gadea's production is marked by her move to the city of Palencia, where she remained active but isolated from artistic circles. In these circumstances, her work takes on a more intimate and lyrical appearance, with a component of fragility added by the use of paper as a support. Various drawings dating from these final years are on view for the first time at this exhibition. The dreamlike and sketchy quality of many of them contrasts with the immediacy and direct appeal to the viewer that characterize all her previous work.

Sabatini Building

3rd Floor, Room 302-304



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