

*This essay was published in José Carlos Casado's catalogue titled: <carne.v01>/<temores.v01>/<"realidades".v01>, by Picasso Foundation. 178 pp. 2003*

## Harkaitz Cano

Reality, what a word. It sounds like cement and soviet council houses, like rationalist houses and blue divers drying up in courtyards. Reality sounds like filthy Le Corbusier, like what the American writers call *outskirts* and the Marseillaise Jean-Claude Izzo would call *banlieue*. I can imagine perfectly well. *Welcome to Reality, housing estate built in 1968*. Unfinished housing estate. Unfinished fog in Joseph M. W. Turner's pictures. *Finished/Unfinished?*, the walls in the Tate Gallery ask. Beautiful question to be asked by a wall. And we are certain that only what is unfinished is alive. Because what is unfinished allows us to get in the work of art, to dirty it with the imagination, to accommodate ourselves in it like in a rented apartment. What is unfinished offers us a protection: an escaping point. Only what is unfinished is real. What is finished is, vulgarly and simply, tangible. It is really time to praise also what is intangible.

Reality, Pandora, escaping point. Notes I take, not entirely finishing.

Spike Lee explains us in the ten minutes he is given in *Ten minutes older (The trumpet)* what reality is under his point of view. Ten minutes entitled *We wuz robbed*, where he explains how Al Gore lost the elections in ten minutes, the ten minutes he was undecided and the minutes in which George W. Bush proclaimed without hesitation that he had won. Ten minutes of mediatic bombardment were enough to make a whole nation and the entire world assimilate an absolutely provisional and precarious information that once transmitted could not be rewinded nor deleted under no circumstances from American citizen's minds. If the journalists with serious and implacable faces from the NBC, CBS and so on had said for ten minutes that Bush had won the elections, that was reality. People had assimilated in an organic and unpardonable way that Bush was the new president of The United States. The tubes used to receive food and communication made them think so, this kind of virtual catheters we are connected to. It would be useless to count the votes again, to appeal to the Supreme Court, to kick up a fuss. It would be even useless to have won, to be in possession of *the truth*. People believed what the media said and it was impossible to snatch the victory out of Bush's hands. For their whole lives they had believed what the television said: Kennedy's death, the moon landing, news that could not fall through once assimilated via television probe. Why would they stop believing during those ten minutes? That is reality. Conventions and premises that are supported by an elephant that supports another elephant that is supporting another elephant that, at the end, supports a turtle that murdered Kennedy and does not split its sides laughing because its carapace stops it from doing it. Reality and explanations are well-dressed lies, like Julio Cortázar said.

Let's say then that reality is a sock and José Carlos Casado has turned it inside out and knows that the chairs are hanging from the ceiling and the light bulbs are rolling on the floor and have wolfram wires that are about to get broken. And nevertheless, Casado dares to skip rope with this incandescent wolfram wire. And he invites us to skip rope.

At the beginning, it was Pandora. Nowadays it is still Pandora. An empty *nasciturus* inside and curled up outside, that is holding tight his knees and dreams that is dreaming.

There are still naïve people who think to have left the amniotic fluid. It is not true. We are still submerging in baths with warm water and listening to the neighbours' shouts, to Goldberg's variations from the piano player who lives on the fourth floor, to Laura's groans while is being tied up to a chair and sweetly fucked, to the beating on the first floor, *banlieue, outskirts*, reality. Submerged in the bath we listen. We remember or think that we remember the maternal uterus, some peace, some lullabies<sup>1</sup> from long ago when there were no cradles and they were not necessary.

Even longer ago, at the beginning, it was the phallus. Penis turned into umbilical cord turned into a plant that climbs the buildings and reaches the top, like the traditional tale in which the peach stone fallen on the garden, under a window, sprouted and a peach tree grew to reach the sky, robust and strong. Trees that are like erect umbilical cords, trees we embrace not to embrace penises and redden. The umbilical cord, this is the clue. An umbilical cord that now becomes silicon wire or rudimentary wolfram wire, because nowadays communication and embraces are more fragile and we are more susceptible (the *homo sapiens sapiens* stopped being so to become *homo cellophane cellophane*), and maybe live inside a light bulb and the light bulb is on the floor, and the chairs are hanging from the ceiling. And this is reality.

I remember a scene in a Fritz Lang's film: the terrible doctor Mabuse disguised as a hypnotist makes the audience in a theatre think that a whole Tunisian army appears in the centre of the stage and bursts into the stalls, riding their mares. Doctor Mabuse snaps the fingers and everything disappears. It has been an illusion, a mirage provoked by his hypnotic power. The naïve audience claps their hands. It is the first Pandora's box I remember.

Is Pandora's box empty? Ah, this is the question. We agree that Pandora's box is a sock and it is empty, as long as it is not turned inside out, because it will not be the same one: its seams will be clearly seen, its wounds, its scars, the remains of the barbed wire that stops us from advancing in the trenches of the soul. Because both images one beside the other, both eyes, seem to show that what we see is seen from inside a head (see... *Being John Malkovich* – and not to die attempting to be so –) a head wearing a mask, and a mask can be used to cover any part of the body we feel like and not necessarily the face. World of masks and tales, revisited childhood that the artist remembers and reinvent. The king is sporting a new suit and just the little child dares to shout: "The king is wearing the burka!". Mask boy, insolent boy pointing with the finger, unique artist boy we have to thank a lot to.

Can you already feel the pressure of the amniotic fluid?

Flesh is the building lodging every exhibition. Flesh is fragmented bodies, Modigliani and Velázquez with Polaroid complaining about the lost time and about what they could have done if (*what we could have done if...*sentence erased from the lamentation proverbs by technology.) The Last Supper of the Apostles is flesh, but the posted and apostate Apostles are now naked and linked, El Bosco's characters who go to the gym to make sit-ups and shave their heads cleanly. Like the sky, clean. It was the Last Supper and they ate each other, with pleasure, gluttony, festively (see *Dans ma peau*, by the French cinema director Marina de Van.) This is flesh: people trying to eat their bodies, a question of changeable proportions by means of zoom, reversible bodies, little Lilliputians going in Gulliver's mouth while he is tied and lying down (Lilliputians have mutated: they are now wearing stiletto heels, the *drag* touch has arrived to Gulliver's tale; again, childhood.)

---

<sup>1</sup> In Spanish *canciones de cuna* ("songs for the cradle"). (Note of the translator)

Fears are to be afraid of someone who may burst our body using a remote control unit, scarecrow who does not scare and birds make fun of it, voluntary voodoo, puppet who is afraid of bursting, and so on. What else could we add? And so on.

We could add that fear always takes us and brings us to a hole, an abyss, a wound, a scar to look through and be seen. A box that is a wound. Synonyms of a falling. A fish with the *eyes wide open* and the mouth open is waiting for us at the end of the hole (see *Bilbao* by Bigas Luna, when the *voyeur* puts an XXL sausage in a big herring's mouth.) Fear takes us to Pandora. *Banlieue, outskirts, soviet council house*, or perhaps: all of them are reflected on a pond.

A bee, another clue. A bee fertilizing or being fertilized, because to empty ourselves is also to fertilize, to fertilize emptiness, to fertilize the other way round, reversible, fertilization of no, Bartleby fertilization, Pandora Style.

We have seen the wires people and objects are linked by in a strange conjunction more and more possible, less exotic, more assimilable. We should not be afraid of wires, if our bodies are those moving them and our messages those they have tattooed. Just the threads others try to move and we feel every morning in every tip of every finger must put ourselves on one's guard. But apart from the wires, the other option is bees, *beesexuality*: don't be wrong, *beesexuality* does not deny wires sexuality, but proposes another one, adds a new one, helps nature (*housing estate built in 1968, reality, banlieue, outskirts*). Wire or bee, bee or wire. Handmade way or hyperlinked man. One day the governments-multinationals will forbid beehives, but meanwhile. What to add, meanwhile.

Meanwhile, Pandora. The important thing is not reality then, but perception. Something can be perfectly real, but if the perceptive channels do not process it or process it in a different way as it is conventional, this reality will lack credibility or its allegedly real qualities will be clearly reduced or altered. We do not have to identify perception with unreality. Modigliani once said: "I am not searching for what is real. Neither what is unreal, but unconsciousness." Pandora's box has the function of searching for this unconsciousness and scrutinizing it. Both screens we simultaneously see present us two parallel examples of unconsciousness that are the same: every screen has a smoke outlet, out to a *banlieue* courtyard or *outskirt*, at the same time fire exit, exit for excrements, for different scars and for other objects among which laughing would be included without a doubt. But the exit is also the entrance, and this way, both screens are communicated by means of a tube that links these two screens of parallel unconsciousness. The audience is, in a way, inside a black light bulb, watching two screens reflected at the same time, one for each eye; two screens linked by the wolfram wire we find inside the light bulb. The audience also has the possibility to interrupt and stop the sequence of the images every time they go in the circle formed on the floor by the wire of the light bulb. They have the switch in their hands, the remote control unit of what they are watching. It would be said that Casado is claiming here the audience's/protagonist's power to decide. The same consequence seems to be emanating from the fact that the screening closes circularly, in a way that makes the story restart, as if it was a computer. This is a simple way to play this question down and to imply that there are a lot of possibilities and that the first choice is not always the best and not even the final one. The hyper-technologic objects of the images that look like time machines are not considered here like in science fiction films that emphasize by means of spectacular lights the unreality and wonder of the impossible marvels already mentioned, but considered with an amazing normality, with the routine character of those who know that these are not but vulgar household-electrics, the washing machines of the future. Men walking on human scaled chessboards warn us again of the dangers of being a piece moved by others according to a game and some interests we are not interested in at all, but we are also calmed down because we know chess exponentially multiplies the possible moves

and it will be always possible for us to embrace an opponent horse and run away at a gallop: white pawn rides a black horse to the outskirts of the suburb called reality.

We talked about that kind of communicating vessels that link and induce the osmosis between both screenings. Those holes – very black, like any hole being proud of being so – get the clothes of those who leave them in the first screen, to spit them out in the second one. Nakedness is contagious. The bee fornicates equally with men and women and the women with the partially melted glass texture seem to be the main characters of paternal pregnancies: the glass women are gestated in the masculine womb and nobody seems to be surprised. And it is maybe this, this naturalness, the main achievement of this work full of symbolisms.

We should not forget that when coldness lies ahead we protect ourselves by means of the foetal position we instinctively acquire. This position is also the one of the egg, of the amphibians laying eggs in the marshes, and therefore it is a position that connects us directly with our ancestors from humid and marshy lands (between the monkey and the hyper thrown cyberman, a frog interposes and makes fun of Darwin and his domestic turtles.) Casado's work fires at both directions: not only at the futuristic and robotic, maybe the most obvious after the first reading, but also at that awareness of coming from the egg, and therefore, of being able to engender it and to reproduce ourselves by means of it, or maybe being cut in two like a snake.

The myths chosen by Casado to represent the lost paradise of the inside of the Pandora's black box-light bulb (let's call it Pan and Dora, not to use Adam and Eve's cliché) seem to speak more developed languages, similar to the sign language, create objects with its corporal language and allow the bees to drill them (drilling and fornicating, not very different sometimes). But they also dance and have fun, celebrate their own lives.

The screenings have their own sound track. The sounds of crackling and slipping finally become an apparently innocent song that clarifies the necessity of humour and irony when filtering the unconscious we are offered (*mi barba tiene tres pelos*<sup>2</sup>, sings a little girl. *La niña que sueña lunas también se mea en la cama*<sup>3</sup>, we would say, paraphrasing a play by Peru C. Sabán.)

Welcome then to the black light bulb where Pan and Dora live, with its apple trees full of bitten apples, apples that fall down due to their weight, and they are not asked for anything. Welcome to the men's diary who start suspecting that are made of oval and semi-melted glass by reality, the box full of deforming mirrors.

José Carlos Casado visits in detail the rubbish dumps in *Brazil* and the scrap metal dealer's in *Blade Runner* and shows us the other men and the other possible worlds, the not taken ways, the rejected, the experiments that have not been made yet, prophecies of misdirected hominid, (ill)advised or simply derisory crossings, reasons enough to make the turtle supporting the elephants go on splitting its sides laughing (or almost: its carapace still protects it, for the time being, and there are still people who call it God.) But this bee. This anxious bee. This bee can pierce the Reality Sock, to sting and fertilize us, to inject into us its emptiness and straight away to be far away from us, not within our reach and our anger. Not even within our affection and our wasted love that the bee rejects or simply prefers to ignore. People's friendship in big cities (*outskirts, banlieue*) is bees' friendship. A volatile friendship, nameless, without umbilical cord, a friendship that imperceptibly arises in dark rooms and

---

<sup>2</sup> “my beard has three hairs”. This is part of a popular Spanish song for children. (Note of the translator)

<sup>3</sup> “the girl who dreams of moons also pisses her bed” (Note of the translator)

fades away easily. A friendship saying, "From: To: today I am far away I love you send". Pandora bees are like that.

I hear people talking about reality and about *normal* things. But long ago someone said: "normal? What is normal is to be dead". Two dates, birth and death, and between them, an incandescent bend that connects them smile-shaped. Jump and enjoy, laugh at the turtles that think they are God.

Reality, a fearful person trembles and goes or falls into the hole, the wound, the Pandora's box. Kisses, radiograph of kisses. Radiographies and incorrect focusing, fragments of binary breath that go to the essence. To go into the Pandora's box is to sink and breathe at the same time. Exactly. Reality, what a word.

> [info@josecarloscasado.com](mailto:info@josecarloscasado.com) > <http://www.josecarloscasado.com> > © casado-all rights reserved