

# The River of Endless Love<sup>1</sup>

Rosa Martínez

“My art is grounded in the belief of one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy.”

Ana Mendieta, 1983

“A Selection of Statements and Notes”,  
*Sulfur*, vol. 22, 1988, 70.

“The mind of the great sage of India is intimately transmitted from west to east. While human faculties are sharp or dull, the Way has no northern or southern ancestors.”

Sekito Kisen (700-790)

*Sandokai* (Harmony of Difference and Sameness)

## *The Search for Vision*

Some works of art caress our senses with the lightness of a feather. Others pierce our heart like a sword. Some are curative, for their wisdom and beauty act as a balm for our sorrows. A few arouse our critical intelligence and make us aware of evil and injustice. The subtle irony of others makes us smile. Some even offer us a refreshing silence, a pause in the maelstrom, a space for meditation. Others act as energy condensers, like batteries charged with meaning. But they all need a viewer in order to exist. They all expect that interpretative, plastic transfer that shapes our sensations, awareness and affections. They all wish to convey their vision, be it purely aesthetic, playful, ideological or deeply sacramental.

Quantum physics has taught us that the existence and identity of things is based on transformation and not on an immutable essence,

1. The title of this essay is taken from the 1988 song, *River of Endless Love* by The Moody Blues.

Opposite Page: Descartes, René (1596–1650), *Traité de l'Homme*. Published 1677 by T. Girard in Paris.

and that the interpretation of the observer modifies the observed. Insofar as it gives the viewer the role of creator, quantum physics coincides with the theory of language, which believes that the reader is also an author. Subjectivity and objectivity, phenomenology and perception are interwoven.

However, as Rilke said, the world into which we are born is a world that has already been interpreted, and our growth process fluctuates between the need to learn its codes and our yearning to be free of the clichés in which meanings are entrenched. We are body and language; we continue to need instruments of vision and methods of thought that will help us navigate through life and implement the ability to transform ourselves. To quote Miyazawa Kenji,<sup>2</sup> perhaps everything is no more than a landscape of our soul and perhaps to shape that landscape is the great Work we are called on to perform.

Literature and film have offered us paradigmatic creations on the physical and symbolic paths a human being will journey through to discover himself or to explore the multiple dimensions of existence. From Ulysses' travels to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, from Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* to Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, there is nothing for us but to persevere in order to navigate the earthly or infernal world in which we live.

The 1989 film, *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* by South Korean director Yong-Kyung Bae, is a profound reflection on morality in the search for enlightenment and on the awareness of death as experienced by a Zen master, his disciple and a young apprentice. The master advances several koans that have to be solved and states, "When you dig up the moon in your inmost mind to light up the sky and the earth, its light will chase away all the shadows of the universe."

### *To Read the World Again*

At the onset of the twenty-first century, the concept of the work of art is not only based on the material nature of its support, nor is it identified with the idea of object. Painting and sculpture have broadened their

2. Miyazawa Kenji, *Spring and Ashura* (1924). Translated into English by Ruriko Suzuki, *An Asura in Spring*, Shohakusha, 1999.

"These poems would make man, the Milky Way / the Hecatomb and the sea urchin / think of the cool Theory of Essence / as they feed on the dust of the universe / or breathe the air of salt water. / But all is reduced to a landscape of our soul."

traditional formats. Film, drama, performance art, happenings, photography and all forms of relational art have opened new doors to the ontology of what is considered art. Classical borders have become porous, disciplines are interconnected and artistic activity has spread to new physical, conceptual, social and geopolitical territories.

Today, science, art and philosophy move towards a vision of humanity and the cosmos that is unitary, not divided. When Beuys said that “Every man is an artist” and that the transformation of thought through words is in itself a sculptural act, he was not far from the Buddhist idea that every one of us is a potentially enlightened being, a Buddha, a god.

To curate an exhibition is to propose a subtle yet determined combination of works, to articulate a reinterpretation of the world, one that is partial and fragmentary, but as true as possible. Curators are mediators, interpreters, catalysts and channels for the experiences of others that become their own.

In the realm of art shows, diachronic interpretations assess the evolution of forms, while thematic proposals explore specific aspects of cultural production more deeply. Totalising visions give way to other developments, other forms of interpretation. In this opening up of new spaces, synchronic interpretations and the transversal interconnection of works from different cultures and ages have appeared in curatorial practice as propitiatory exercises. This prospective gaze prefigures a near future in which differences will cease to mean hierarchy, separation and exclusion, and will prioritise instead the values of co-existence, sympathy and interconnection.

This task requires sifting through the mad circulation of messages, shedding new light on what is already known and, in the best of cases, tracing an unexpected flash of awareness and thereby triggering an uncommon joy. Conceiving images as ‘operational symptoms’, revealing their elective affinities, expanding the reverberations of meaning that throb within them. To study their symbolic migrations and global legibility is the task. However, it is not only an intellectual task, but an exercise that needs a heart.

### *The Exhibition as a Journey*

Unforeseen associations of objects and images pointing to something that has not yet been visualised and revealing the ‘magnetic anomalies’ that exist between works leads to the discovery of new sculptural and poetic qualities of the real, as Harald Szeemann declared and practiced. By uniting visible things to the invisible space that surrounds them, we create the continuity of the world. And that continuity can be transformative because it invites us to overturn previous preconceptions and invent new territories of meaning.

Visiting an exhibition is a phenomenological experience and, in the best of cases, it can be a rite of passage, an emotional and spiritual transfiguration. The exhibition is a proposal, a guiding tool to enable us to see through the eyes of the spirit. Its effect can be even greater if the power of love inspires the choice of works and the rhythms between them, if the spatial sequences, the volumes and voids, lights and shadows are carefully planned.

The fact that the Palazzo Fortuny should be the architectural and symbolic setting in which our curatorial exercise suggests new possibilities for vision is particularly relevant. Fortuny combined fashion, painting, philosophy, trade, set design, lighting and photography with a huge passion for Eastern wisdom. His *palazzo* embraced a certain way of life and was a laboratory where the arts could be interconnected.

*TRA: Edge of Becoming* hopes to share and broaden the radiance of this legacy, to establish the flows of beauty, love and awareness that transcend it, to grant access to some celestial spheres without excluding the vision of the door to hell. Today, this is a source of pleasure and growth that can be obtained through various types of ecstasy, the fortuitous and incomplete relations of which can be traced through the echoes of some of the works in the exhibition:

- Consider the thought of a Zen monk who, over 1200 years ago, decided to abandon his monastery in order to escape from the inflexibility of a rule that was too strict and castrated genuine spiritual search.



Descartes, René  
(1596–1650),  
*Traité de l'homme*.  
Published 1677 by  
T. Girard in Paris.

- Observe the inside of a ritual African mask, whose strange eyes and fading smile tell us of the other side, the other world.
- Imagine the cosmic weight of ultramarine blue.
- Understand the suffering of a woman crossing through darkness under a stone before surfacing once again to the light, purified and redeemed, as a healing ritual and a promise.
- Enter and exit through fictitious migratory doors that make us ‘Oriental’ or ‘Occidental’.
- Discover in the *wabi* labyrinth space, a work consisting of two strokes on the upper and lower parts of the canvas: the demarcation of the void, above and below the horizon.
- Share the beauty of dialogue with the dead and the generosity of singing softly to corpses.
- Stroll through a forest of voodoo dolls made out of industrial waste.
- Admire a woman who keeps her balance on the horizon of the sea.
- Imagine that we are walking up a liquid ladder made of transparent glass that doesn’t break.
- Lift up our arm in a dark room to gain access to a beam of light. To become light.
- Observe a blackbird that comes up to eat seeds in the courtyard of the palace.
- See a rainbow appear on a skirting board, at floor level.

Within the multifaceted tour of the Palazzo Fortuny we come across the artist’s studio, a hidden matrix, a secret chamber with a plain sink for washing the paintbrushes. The marks left by the brushes on the plaster of the wall are traces of waste, involuntary non-artistic signs of the existence of the tools Fortuny used to shape one of the multiple possibilities of seeing and being. These marks provide an indication and a hope for all those who still want to make the effort to see and to be.

If it is true that we all eventually find the necessary echoes for our paths, then we shall probably leave the exhibition having navigated a river of endless love and wisdom, a river with secret bends and turbulence that will continue to flow towards new hopes and becomings.