

***Murmuration – Devenir Nuée*¹**

The title of the exhibition, *Estorninos*, at once enigmatic and poetic, reveals many aspects of the work Vicente Blanco has been developing over recent years. Starlings are highly social birds that live in groups, gathering in the evenings in the countryside or in urban centres. This phenomenon is known as murmuration: a dance performed by flocks of birds that undulate like a wave across the sky. This phenomenon, which has been widely studied — among others by Giorgio Parisi, Nobel Prize winner in Physics — is particularly interesting in the analysis of collective behaviour, as it demonstrates that a complex order can emerge without centralised direction. In a murmuration there is no chief, no leader; movement spreads from one bird to another, each adjusting its direction and speed in relation to those of its neighbours, creating movements and undulations. From an ethological point of view, it becomes apparent that the relevant unit is not the isolated individual but the network of interactions it maintains with its fellow birds. The word *murmuration* echoes the rustling of wings, the murmurs of this aerial choreography, which also serves as a means of defense against predators.

In Vicente Blanco's works, we often find the opening scenes of stories in which human, animal and plant forms are intermingled. Forms metamorphose, undulate, merge and intertwine in a choreography that in many ways recalls that of the starlings. The movements of the soul correspond inexorably to the fluidity of bodies.

In her *Animal Studies*, choreographer Simone Forti began by observing the movements of animals at the Rome Zoo. These observations resulted in drawings and performative actions. For her, the animal is an operator that makes it possible to rethink movement, presence and our relationship to the world in a renewed way. In *Sleep Walkers – Zoo Mantras* (1968), the movements of animals become a kind of prayer. She has always considered dance as a means of allowing oneself to be traversed by that which, whether visible or invisible, moves through the world. As in the works presented in the exhibition, the body is the place where, through and within movement, connections are formed with other forms of life, both human and non-human.

Drawing lies at the foundation of his artistic practice. There is a sense of spontaneity, of fluidity of gesture. The figures emerge through the act of drawing, in a process at the threshold of consciousness. The gesture becomes repetitive, like a ritual that enables the construction of a mental space.

¹ **Translator's note:** In French, 'nuée' can refer to a cloud or a flock of birds or insects and, by extension, to a crowd; these meanings are not captured by a single word in Spanish.

Some drawings are enlarged, reproduced and transferred onto canvas built up with several layers of pigmented gesso. There is a palpable sense of accumulated layers that gives the surface a flesh-like dimension. Sometimes, painted papers appear creating new layers. The coloured surface unifies the whole, capturing the gaze and engaging the senses.

Vicente Blanco's works are distinctive and sensitive, both in their subject matter and in their technical execution. He takes a personal history as his starting point, evoking highly contemporary questions such as our relationships with nature and with one another. His projects emerge from observing his immediate surroundings. He lives in a rural region where relationships to identity, traditions, architecture, landscape and language are being transformed and disappearing under the effects of neoliberalism. He invents an imaginary world that recalls our fragility in the face of the erasure of our relationship with nature, human bonds, and collective and individual memory. In the earlier series *Unexpected Bodies*, he referred to "dissidents" who free themselves from rules and reclaim their bodies and desires outside constrained spaces. "I present actions and characters that have no place within the normative. It seems that in cities, the response is more compartmentalised, but I want to reclaim it in a more organic way, starting from nature itself." VB. This mental space evokes a kind of anomie, a condition in which the individual finds themselves when the rules that guide their behaviour and aspirations lose their power. The absence of rules does not necessarily produce greater freedom if desires encounter neither a symbolic order nor a shared horizon.

In *Habiter en oiseau*, Vinciane Despret* warns against the temptation to focus on the visual forms of murmuration — clouds, arabesques, figures. It is, above all, a way for starlings to inhabit the world together: the form does not pre-exist; it emerges from proximity and mutual attention. A process of co-individuation takes shape in which individuals are constituted at the same time as the collective to which they belong. Throughout Vicente Blanco's work, drawing and colour bring forth a world to come in which a coexistence between humans and non-humans is being formed, each mutually transforming the other. Ethical and political questions are at stake here, leading us to allow ourselves to be affected by other forms of sensitivity and to open ourselves to alterity. The space of the canvas becomes the place where these metamorphoses can occur.

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* Vinciane Despret, *Habitar como un pájaro*, Editorial Oveja Roja.