

Repensar los estudios ibéricos desde la periferia

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Between Both Sides of the Atlantic Galician Visual Artists in New York

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Abstract The growing field of Galician cultural studies has been moving rapidly out of the periphery of academic scholarship. The latest developments in this field have been marked by the effects of globalization and the expansion of its scope to include areas previously considered as a ‘periphery’ of cultural studies, such as visual arts. Influenced by these tendencies, this paper focuses on two contemporary Galician visual artists, both internationally acclaimed, sculptor Francisco Leiro and painter Antonio Murado. They are both prominent Galician artists whose sources of creative power are linked to their Galician roots. Currently they are both based in New York, one of the most important centres of contemporary art in the global stage. This essay discusses Leiro and Murado’s oeuvre as an example of the cross-cultural connections between the two sides of the Atlantic.

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Keywords Galician studies. Visual Art. Francisco Leiro. Antonio Murado.

1 Introduction

Rethinking Hispanic studies from the ‘periphery’ naturally invites us to take into consideration the centre-periphery model, which in the social sciences is used to explain the relationship between an advanced ‘centre’ and a less developed ‘periphery’. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, Marxist theorists showed the centre-periphery antagonism between town and country. The formulation of basic aspects of the centre-periphery model in terms of economic inequalities is widely associated with the works by Gunnar Myrdal (1957) and Albert Hirschman (1958). In the 1970s a number of works appeared, linking the centre-periphery model to imperialism and undeveloped regions, as in the works of Samir Amin (1977) and Andre Frank (1978). Since then this model has not only been applied to the interaction between developed capitalist nations and developing societies, but also in many cases of relationship between European centres and their ‘peripheries’, for example, Wales and Scotland (Ferrão, Jensen-Butler 1984, 376). In the case of Spain, the centre-periphery model has been em-

ployed in academic debates on the relationship between the Spanish state and so-called historical nationalities, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia (Stapell 2007, 172). The case of Galicia, due to its geopolitical and economic position in the nation state and the particularly long history of neglected identity, seems to be especially apt for debates focused on the centre-periphery model, especially in the economic and political sense. However, Galicia's 'peripheral' status is rather questionable in relation to Galician contemporary culture. The global processes of decentralisation of cultural production, consumption and the new currents of globalisation have profoundly affected contemporary Galician culture, which often exceeds the limits of the nation estate on the global stage (particularly in music, audiovisual production and the visual arts). For instance, a Galician musician, Carlos Núñez, is an international star and an ambassador of traditional Galician Celtic music who regularly performs all over the world and who has collaborated with musicians from different countries, including *The Chieftains*, an Irish band, and Ry Cooder, an American musician and songwriter. Another example is the emergence of the *Novo Cinema Galego* (New Galician Cinema), a generation of filmmakers from Galicia who in the last ten years have been successful in important international competitions and festivals, such as Oliver Laxe, who was awarded prizes at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010 and 2016. In the domain of visual arts, such is also the case with two contemporary Galician artists currently based in New York City, sculptor Francisco Leiro and painter Antonio Murado, who actively exhibit and participate in cultural projects on both sides of the Atlantic. I intend to approach the discussion of Leiro's and Murado's work bearing in mind some of the current theoretical trends in the field of Galician Cultural Studies, outlined below.

2 Galician Cultural Studies Today

Galician Cultural Studies is an academic area that has emerged in recent years as an autonomous field parallel to Iberian and Hispanic Cultural Studies. The ground-breaking volume *Contemporary Galician Cultural Studies. Between the Local and the Global*, published in 2011 and edited by Kristy Hooper and Manuel Puga Moruxa, was not only the first reference book available in English on the topic, but also a work that set an important perspective towards Galician culture with a focus on the juxtaposition of local and global dynamics. This volume of interdisciplinary essays, which covers a range of areas of Galician culture, analyses ways of expressing Galician identity that has shifted from a local to a global context, being nowadays a "part of a complex network of individual, group, local, and transnational identities" (Hooper, Puga Moruxa 2011, 99). The volume shows Galician culture as a pivotal vehicle for the expression of Galician

identity, since the traditional political, territorial and linguistic aspects of national identity do not function in Galicia in the same way as they function in other communities. This situation is caused, among other reasons, by the political status of Galicia as a 'historical nationality' within the Spanish nation state, the centuries-long prevalence of Castilian over the Galician language, and the dispersion of Galician people due to massive emigration (Hooper, Puga Moruxa 2011, 99).

In 2012, Eugenia Romero in her book *Contemporary Galician Culture in a Global Context: Movable Identities* continued the exploration of this approach, focusing on the representation of Galicia through the deconstruction of traditional oppositional binaries. She argued that in order to understand contemporary Galician identity and also to explain its cultural hybridity it was necessary to overcome binaries such as rural and urban, traditional and modern, backwards and advanced, emigrant and non-emigrant, and Galician and Castilian (Romero 2012, xviii).

In 2017, José Colmeiro proposed in his book *Peripheral Visions / Global Sounds: From Galicia to the World* to rethink the new horizons of Galician studies in terms of 'deterritorialization' and 'deperipheralization'. The term 'deterritorialization' is originally a psychoanalytic concept created by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1972 to designate the process of freeing desire from established institutions and objects, for example, from the nuclear family (Holland 1999, 19). Later they expanded the use of the term to refer to the complex process of escaping from or leaving a given territory, understood as a system in any register, including social, linguistic or affective (Patton 2010, 52). Since the 1990s the term 'deterritorialization' has been used in relation to globalizing processes to reflect the effects of migration, changes in living and working patterns, a weakening of the cultural bond with territory and the simultaneous expansion of cultural horizons (Tomlinson 1999, 104-20). Obviously, these globalizing processes are applicable to Galicia as well. The notion of 'deperipheralization' literally suggests an emancipatory move from the outskirts, in any register, spatial or socio-cultural, which, according to Colmeiro, includes "revising and rethinking cultural practices and identities from the margins and borders" (2017, 69). In addition, Colmeiro employs this term to incorporate a wider field of view, which implies a shift from the prevalence of mainstream forms of Galician culture and studies, such as language, literature, and to some extent cinema, towards less researched areas, such as music, visual arts, and performing arts, to mention only a few. Colmeiro calls for an analysis of a wider range of Galician cultural practices as a means to overcome the limitations of long-existing boundaries imposed by the philological criterion and geopolitical limits (Colmeiro 2017, 68-9).

As can be seen from this very brief overview of Galician cultural studies, the mobility of Galician culture is one of the focuses in this field and this tendency has affected my choice of the subject matter for this paper.

Francisco Leiro and Antonio Murado are recent examples of this cultural mobility, but this phenomenon is not completely new, as it has been a characteristic of modern Galician culture, including the visual arts. From the nineteenth century, the significant Galician diaspora in Buenos Aires attracted painters from mainland Galicia to participate in exhibitions organized by Galician cultural centres in that city. In the twentieth century, due to the Spanish civil war and the subsequent dictatorship, many Galician visual artists went into exile and worked outside Galicia, in other European countries, Latin America and the United States. This was the case in outstanding figures of Galician visual culture such as Alfonso Castelao, Luís Seoane, Maruja Mallo, Manuel Colmeiro, Eugenio Granell and many others. These artists introduced Galician art to the world and then returned to Galicia, bringing back international art tendencies. In the twenty-first century, Leiro and Murado are probably the most important visual artists whose geographical and cultural position embodies the juxtaposition of local and global vectors in Galician culture. On the one hand, they are recognised on an international scale through living, working, and participating in the art scene in New York City, one of the biggest art marketplaces in the world and a very important global centre of contemporary art. On the other hand, they are prominent Galician-identified artists, and I intend to show that their creative power is intimately linked to their Galician roots by tracing it back to certain elements of Galician cultural identity.

3 Francisco Leiro

Francisco Leiro is the best-known and most acknowledged contemporary Galician artist on the international stage. He has been regarded as one of the main exponents of sculpture in Galicia and Spain since the 1980s. He was born in the small Galician town of Cambados in 1957 and from an early age he became interested in art, particularly in traditional Spanish and Galician sculpture. Leiro studied stonework first at the *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* in Santiago de Compostela and later at the *Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* in Madrid, where his focus was on both sculpture and drawing. In the 1970s, he belonged to the group of young Galician artists called *Foga* (Fato Ounirista Galego), which had a strong surrealist vein. This surrealist influence was already evident in Leiro's first solo exhibition, which took place in 1975 in his hometown of Cambados (Olmo 2003, 25; Marlborough Gallery 2013).

After the end of Franco's dictatorship, Spanish society was full of enthusiasm and aspirations for change and freedom, both in politics and in culture. The *Transición* period was also marked by a return to national roots and the reconstruction of a cultural and political Galician identity, many expressions of which had been repressed under Franco's regime. In 1980, a number

of very diverse Galician visual artists founded the influential group called *Atlántica* with the purpose of “discutir el país” (to discuss the Galician nation) (Mariño 2000, 605) and revitalising the links with the Galician *arte de vanguardia* before the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War. *Atlántica* organised five exhibitions between 1980 and 1985 in Galicia, which became major influential events for the renewal of modern Galician art. Although Leiro did not belong to *Atlántica*, he was close to the group and participated in their exhibition in 1983. He attracted considerable attention from critics as one of the most promising artists of the generation that would change the course of Spanish and Galician art at the beginning of the 1980s. Soon he was invited to organise an individual exhibition in Madrid and at other prestigious international art events around the world, including Basel, Naples, London and San Paolo (Olmo 2003, 27; Montero Pérez 2003).

By the 1980s Leiro had already developed his individual and highly distinctive style characterised as an intersection of the figurative and the abstract, for which the artist used very diverse iconographical sources. It is possible to draw parallels between some Leiro’s wooden sculptures of the early 1980s and German Neo-Expressionism, particularly the works of Georg Baselitz (Olmo 2003, 37). This connection is illustrated, for instance, by comparing Baselitz’ works with Leiro’s *Coloso deitado* (Lying Colossus) (1985).¹ Other sculptures, for instance, the internationally celebrated, *Eva* (Eve) (1982), which is located in the Colección Fondazione Amelio in Naples, epitomise the tradition of polychromatic woodcarvings of the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque art (Olmo 2003, 37). The most notable examples of such art are Alonso Berruguete’s *Ecce Homo* (1525) and Pedro de Mena’s *La Magdalena penitente* (Penitent Mary Magdalene) (1664). This heritage has been very important for Galician art and was employed by many outstanding Galician sculptors of the twentieth century, a notable example of which is Francisco Asorey’s *Filliña* (Little Girl) (1949).² Furthermore, some of Leiro’s works are clearly inspired by archaic art, as can be seen from the comparison of Leiro’s *A dama de Gondel* (Lady of Gondel) (1986)³ with the archetypical figure of Lady of Auxerre at the Louvre Museum (c. 640-30 BC).

Leiro’s world is inhabited by a rich variety of references to biblical themes and universal myths, as seen in the sculptures *Eva expulsada do paraíso* (Eve Expelled from Paradise) (1982) and *Sansón derribando as*

1 Afundación Art Collection (Vigo). For copyright reasons, it is not possible to provide the images for the majority of cited artworks. However, they are widely available on-line through social media, catalogues of museums, galleries, and private collections, which are listed in “Online Art Sources”.

2 The Museum of Fine Arts (A Coruña).

3 Afundación Art Collection.

columnas do templo (Samson Pushes Down the Temple Pillars) (1983) (Montero Pérez 2003, 72-5). At the same time, the sculptor often refers to local Galician legends, as in the work *Benito Soto* (1986).⁴ In this piece, Leiro captures the moment when the adventures of the nineteenth century Galician smuggler and pirate Benito ended, immortalising him in a wooden statue where the figure seems to emerge from a tree trunk (de Llano, s.d.). Likewise, his sculpture *Xan Callán* (1983), another internationally celebrated work from the collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, is inspired by a Galician popular character. This human figure with its missing limbs is an example of a recurrent motif in many other works by Leiro, a mixture of the supernatural, the surreal and an ironic sense of humour. These elements have a long tradition in Galician culture. Firstly, the predisposition to mysterious events is to some extent embedded in the Galician imagination, as superstitions and supernatural beings are often present in Galician popular culture. Such characters themselves provide frequent subject matter in Leiro's work, examples of which are *A noite* (Night) (1982) or *Trasno* (1982), which portrays a very popular character from Galician folklore, *o trasno*, a little domestic devil. The inclination of Galician artists towards the paranormal and the fantastic can be observed in works of well-known surrealist Galician painters such as Maruja Mallo, Eugenio Granell and Urbano Luigrís. Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos*, distorted literary representations of reality, might be also seen as an example of Galician surrealism and the attraction of the grotesque (Olmo 2003, 25). Secondly, Galician people are known for a very culturally specific attitude, the *retranca galega*, a particular component of Galician humor, which carries a tone of irony and leaves a taste of uncertainty, ambiguity and obscurity. As Montero Pérez indicates, "Leiro is a paeon to Galician culture, to our beliefs and traditions, to the ways of thinking of our land" (2003, 65-6; Author's trans.). The artist's choice of media, which are primarily wood and granite, also connects Leiro's creativity with the Galician land. Both natural materials are very characteristic of the Galician landscape and they possess a high symbolic value. As Montero Pérez argues, they are often perceived as "cult objects and identifiers of Galicia's imaginary and idiosyncrasy" (2003, 68; Author's trans.).

Francisco Leiro moved to New York in 1988 on a Fulbright scholarship. His work attracted the attention of the New York art press, perceiving in his twisted bodies and absurd features the legacy of Goya and Picasso (Glueck 1998). Although by the end of the 1990s Leiro showed more interest in the figurative qualities of corporal movements and facial ex-

4 "La Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art (Barcelona).

pressions, like in the works *Pigmalión*⁵ or *Carrier*,⁶ both from 1998, they hardly can be described as naturalistic because of the loose interpretation of the human anatomy and the intentional exaggeration of proportions. At the same time, many works of that period, for instance, *Muda o cacho* (Change of Face) (1998) or *Sileno acarreado por tres sátiros* (Sileno Carried by Three Satyrs) (1996),⁷ show the influence of surrealism in their deliberate distortions.

Ever since moving to New York, Leiro has been living and working between the two sides of the Atlantic. He has kept his studio in Cambados from where he has produced a number of public commissioned works in Galicia and elsewhere in Spain, including the impressive bronze sculpture *O Sereo*, Galician for 'male mermaid.' Since it was erected in Vigo's main square (Porta do Sol) in 1991, this imaginary fantastic character, a hybrid of fish and man, has become one of the most representative monuments in Vigo, because it plays with traditional Galician imagination and its strong seafaring culture and mythology and at the same time striking for its originality and modernity (fig. 1).

Since the 1990s, Francisco Leiro has produced a number of works that can be described as sculptural psychological portraits, a collection of human sentiments, for which the artist has expressed empathy and compassion. A reflection on world violence occupies a very special place in Leiro's work. He translates media images of wars, pain and brutality into sculptures, expressing solidarity with the everyday reality of human suffering and ecological disasters (Otero 2015). A number of Leiro's works of this type was assembled at the exhibition *Esculturas Sentidas* (Heartfelt Sculptures) in A Coruña in 2015. These were displayed with the photographs in the background, which helped viewers to identify the depicted events. The curator of this exhibition, Rosario Sarmiento, compared Leiro's documentary and sentimental vision with Picasso's reaction to the bombing of Guernica in 1937 in the mural of the same name (2015). In this way, *Plañideras* (Mourners) (2009)⁸ is a response to the bombardments of the civilian population of Gaza during Israel's Operation "Cast Lead" of 2008-2009, also known in Arab countries as the "Gaza Massacre". The sculpture portrays Palestinian women raising their arms in despair and screaming from anger and pain (Otero 2015). Another striking piece in the exhibition was the sculpture of a Balkan mother carrying her dead son on her head,

5 Fundación María José Jove Art Collection (A Coruña).

6 Afundación Art Collection.

7 Both in the ABANCA Art Collection (A Coruña).

8 Marlborough Gallery (Madrid and Barcelona).



Figura 1. Francisco Leiro, *O Sereo*. 1991. Stainless steel on granite columns, figure 3 × 7 × 2 m, columns 13 m. Porta do Sol Square, Vigo, Spain. Photograph by the Author

Molido (Head Pillow) (1999),⁹ which represents the brutality of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Here Leiro employed some particular aspects of Galician iconography and ethnography to comment on the human condition of the world afflicted by ethnic war, as the title refers to traditional Galician women, such as urban street fish sellers and women from rural areas usually carrying weights on their head, who use a little pillow called a *molido*. At the same time, Leiro suggests a take on a classic scene of Christian imagery, the Pietà, a mother grieving over the death of her son (Otero 2015; Sarmiento 2015).

Another work in that exhibition, *David* (2001),¹⁰ is a sculpture created right after 9/11 in New York, which Leiro witnessed first-hand. It conveys the shock of the terrorist act that profoundly traumatised American society and the world in our century. This sculpture also uses religious imagery in the depiction of David sitting on the sandal of giant Goliath, horrified with this absurd violence and completely lost in the face of the disaster (Sarmiento 2015).

9 Afundación Art Collection.

10 Marlborough Gallery (Madrid and Barcelona).

Leiro's artistic reflection explores the many facets of the human condition, the suffering and the pain, individual and collective, as well as everyday realities. Sometimes everyday activities can be exceptional, as in the case of the representation of environmental disasters and natural tragedies. The set of statues *Recolectoras* (Female Collectors) (2003)¹¹ addresses the ecological tragedy of the spillage of fuel from the "Prestige" oil tanker near the coast of Galicia in 2002. This well-known composition celebrates the solidarity of Galician volunteers who cleaned up the contaminated coastline. At the same time, the title of this work makes clear reference to one of the traditional jobs in the Galician seafood industry, as *recolectoras* are women who collect shellfish. The environmental theme is continued in Leiro's *Retén* (Team) (2005),¹² an artistic response to the tragic wild fires in Guadalajara, in which he pays homage to the noble work of the firefighters (Sarmiento 2015).

In fact, Leiro expresses his admiration for all kinds of human activity and often draws inspiration from everyday life. His collection ironically titled *Human Resources* (2013)¹³ investigates a variety of human gestures and the power of human labour, as observed in polychromatic wood sculptures *Box 1 and Box 2* (2011), where the artist portrays the tension between two factory workers who are nailing a box shut. Leiro catches the habitual actions, giving them a somewhat unexpected or even surrealistic quality, as in the work *Exposed* (2011), where a humble man with two masks is lacing up his shoes, or in *Calafateador* (Caulker) (2010), where a naked man is sitting on a four-legged stool, apparently pausing while taking a rest from work (Marlborough Gallery 2013).

The sculptor continues his exploration of the topic of human labour in the exhibition *Purgatorio* (2014).¹⁴ The central part of this collection is a group of wooden human figures symbolically carrying heavy stones, inspired by the second part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, "Purgatory". The human carriers in *Pepe*, *Santi* and *Dirk* (2013) are captured in the moment of high physical tension, struggling to survive and bent under the weight of huge stones, watched by an overseer, *Supervisor 2* (2013). The exhibition is completed by Leiro's particular ironic visions of the mythological character of Sisyphus, in *Sísifo confuso 1* (Confused Sisyphus) (2013) and *Sísifo confuso 2* (2014), confused and tormented by his useless physical work (Arguñol 2014).

11 ABANCA Art Collection (A Coruña).

12 Fundación María José Jove Art Collection.

13 Marlborough Gallery (New York).

14 Marlborough Gallery (Madrid).

In his very recent collection *Lo humano* (The Human) (2017)¹⁵ Leiro once again exposes universal suffering, pain and world injustices through his own particular prism. The central work of this exhibition, *Alepo 1* (2016), is a monumental sculpture dedicated to the people murdered in Aleppo during the Syrian conflict. This composition portrays twisted bodies on a pole, evoking traditional Christian iconography of martyrs. Other works in this exhibition, such as *Rendido* (Exhausted) (2016) or *Ofrenda a Santa Liberata* (Offering to Saint Liberata) (2015), bring to mind characteristic Spanish and Galician sculptural traditions (Ros 2017), in dialogue with international art.

Francisco Leiro is a Galician sculptor, much praised and respected in his native Galicia. He has been awarded several Galician medals, including, in 2016, the most prestigious Galician distinction: Medalla de Ouro de Galicia. At the same time, Leiro is a successful international artist whose works are located in museums, corporate and private collections in Spain, the United States and other countries.¹⁶ The Marlborough gallery, the principal art gallery with which he collaborates, being an international art company with exhibition rooms in New York, London, Madrid and Barcelona, itself embodies the global aspect of the art market where Leiro's work circulates. Francisco Leiro's art is a striking example of his commitment to humanism, he appeals to universal sentiments with an artistic language, which to a high degree has emerged from the sculptor's Galician roots.

4 Antonio Murado

Antonio Murado is one of the most recognized Galician painters of his generation at the international level. He also resides in New York and is known for artworks which are at once abstract and figurative and which inspire aesthetic pleasure and invite intellectual contemplation. Born in 1964 in Lugo, Murado graduated in 1988 from the University of Salamanca with a degree in Fine Arts. During his studies he began participating in collective exhibitions and had his first solo show in 1987. Throughout the 1980s the artist experimented with different genres and media, working mainly in a figurative style. He painted still lifes and landscapes as he also created small wooden sculptures (Castro Fernández 1995, 406). By the 1990s Murado elaborated a new abstract language and developed

15 Marlborough Gallery (Barcelona).

16 Among others, Leiro's work can be found in the Akron Art Museum, Ohio; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Centro Cultural São Lourenço, Portugal; Colección-Fundación Caja de Madrid; Colección Fundación La Caixa, Barcelona; Marugame Hirai Museum, Japan; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Valladolid, Spain; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (Marlborough Gallery 2013).

his own personal style, which very soon received positive reviews and captured the attention of the Galician and Spanish art sector. Murado's paintings from these years are populated by abstract biomorphic shapes floating on canvas. One of the most notable of his series from the 1990s is *Marañas* (Tangles)¹⁷ where the painter completely covers the surface of canvases with an arabesque of round and oval lines. Antón Patiño, a leading Galician painter and one of prominent figures of the movement *Atlántica*, designates Murado's famous *Marañas* as "*escritura neuronal*" (neuron writing) (cited in Castro Fernández 1995, 426), because this is a type of calligraphic painting that implies an intellectual and controlled process (426). Miguel Copón and Félix Duque refer to Murado's painting, as "traces of sound" (2002, 163), using the metaphor of sound that has been recurrent in abstract painting since Wassily Kandinsky, for whom music and colours were inseparable in art. Besides *Marañas*, Murado's visual vocabulary in the 1990s included abstract organic motifs evoking forms of leaves and branches and the imitation of materials and textures. Such imitations can be observed in such works as *Pizarra* (Slate) and *Redes* (Nets) (1994-1995)¹⁸ the titles of which bring to mind some basic aspects of Galicia's land and sea economy. Slate is one of the main mining products in Galicia produce for the national and international markets, while nets are fundamental to the fishing industry, which has always been the main economic activity of the coastal Galicia.

Although Murado's paintings can be generally ascribed to the realm of abstraction, it would not be accurate to characterise his works as completely non-figurative. Murado himself explains this fact in one interview: "I have always thought that there is not much difference between the abstract and the figurative and I think that is not a very good classification for painting. It seems to me that everything is abstract and everything is figurative... The subject is abstract but the approach is figurative in the sense that there is not the representation of a reality but the creation of reality" (cited in Varela 2015; Author's trans.).

In the 1990s, Antonio Murado won several art awards in Spain and became a recipient of different grants from Galician and Spanish cultural institutions. Thanks to one of them, from the Unión Fenosa, he entered the Cooper Union School of Art in New York in 1995. Since then the artist has been living and working in New York, a city that he finds stimulating in many senses (Bugallal 2013). Here his career has enjoyed subsequent successful development; the US art press has praised his works, characterizing Murado's canvases as "feats of technical virtuosity" (Wall Street International 2013) and "at once sumptuous and playfully academic" (Johnston 2001).

17 ABANCA Art Collection; Afundación Art Collection.

18 ABANCA Art Collection; Afundación Art Collection.

Despite living in New York and being widely considered a truly international artist whose exhibitions can be seen around the world, including such remote places as New Zealand, Murado has maintained close contact with Galicia and has regularly returned to Galicia, including with personal exhibitions. One of them, titled *AM34x24 Vol.1* took place at the provincial museum of Murado's native town of Lugo in 2005 and was prepared exclusively for this event. It was quite an unusual project, for which Murado employed both abstract works and photography-based portraiture. He depicted his family and friends either in disguise or blended with symbolic surroundings, often with humour. Thus, his friend, sculptor Francisco Leiro appeared dressed as a Brazilian plantation owner, while his parents look like characters from a black and white Neorealist Italian film (Barro 2005; Mato 2016). It is possible to interpret this unusual project as Murado's aspiration to reflect on his Galician roots, seen from the global perspective and narrated in a subtle humoristic way, with certain traces of the Galician *retranca*. Another unusual project was the exhibition of furniture painted by Murado, which he presented in 2014 at the Chapel of Santa María in Lugo, which is the seat of Centro de Artesanía e Deseño da Diputación de Lugo (Centre of Crafts and Design of the Lugo Council). The painter collaborated with this centre where he had learnt some traditional Galician woodcarving techniques (Varela 2014). In this way, Murado is very much attached to Galicia and his hometown Lugo and in his artistic universe there is a spiritual closeness to his Galician homeland, which the painter summarises with a phrase: "It is the same ocean, there are only different shores" (cited in Beramendi 2015; Author's trans.).

Murado explores the blurred boundaries between abstract and figurative and invites open interpretation. People often read abstract things, for example clouds, according to their imagination or previous visual experiences, while real objects sometimes look quite abstract. Exploring this phenomenon, Murado has created his private photographic archive with images of nature often made deliberately out-of-focus or captured from unusual angles that appear not to have a concrete existence (D'Souza 2002, 37, 52). Murado's artistic methods range from heavily textured impasto to smooth, almost transparent layers. He experiments with a variety of techniques, he investigates the properties of pigments, wax and varnishes and he works with rollers or bundles of cloth, in addition to traditional artist tools, such as brushes, or palette knives (D'Souza 2002, 51-2). He employs spontaneous brushwork, splotches and blobs of paint, calligraphic style marking, scribbling, peeling and scraping, blowing of liquid or turpentine-soaked brushes (Gow Langsford Gallery 2017, 161; Hatchadoorian 2001, 5). He further develops his interest in textures, which he achieves not only by the techniques already mentioned, but also by the choice of canvas and stretcher shapes, or by imitation of craquelure, the network of cracks across the surface, and corrosion (Johnson 2001).

Although Murado does not normally use sketches or drafts, applying paint directly onto the surface in a spontaneous manner, behind each work there is a conceptual figurative scenario, which determines the selection of colours, canvas shape and techniques.

The subject matter in abstract painting is not easily perceived, however, the titles of Murado's works and also his explanations in the catalogue entries indicate that the sources of inspiration are often drawn from literature, history, religion or classic art. So, for the collection *Ophelia* inspired by the character who drowns in a river brook in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, the painter chose to depict different kinds of imaginary flowers (Gow Langsford Gallery 2012). This can be interpreted as an indirect reference to Sir John Everett Millais's famed painting *Ophelia* (1851-1852) where images of flowers possess a symbolic value. As is known, Millais achieved a naturalistic representation of the flowers mentioned in Shakespeare's play, painting them outside in the open air. However, Millais gathers in one place flowers that in fact bloom at different times of the year and that have a symbolic value as attributes of death. For his collection inspired by the tragic fate of Ophelia, Murado employs an original method of blowing liquid paint onto the pale semi-transparent background which creates the effect of petal like forms (Gow Langsford Gallery 2012). This technique allowed him to produce an overall evocation of beautiful flowers, to which Murado gave poetic elegant titles, such as *Little Rose* (2011), *Hermaionne* (2012) or *Leanne* (2011).¹⁹

An example of religious references is the series *Temperamentos*,²⁰ the title of which refers to the works from this collection designating the temperaments assigned to four of the apostles, each symbolised by a different colour (Galería Álvaro Alcázar 2015). Red stands for St. John's temperament, which is sanguine, while green represents St. Peter's phlegmatic character, blue refers to St. Mark's temper, choleric; and white symbolises melancholy, St. Paul's character. As Murado explains, his idea was to establish a connection with Spanish Baroque painting whose themes are primarily religious or mythological, courtly or military, and is widely present in Galician art. Besides the apostles' temperaments, the collection includes abstract canvases that refer to the ceremonial robes of the Spanish Baroque, as seen in *Manto* (Robe) (2015). The effect was achieved by using large cloth rags to leave marks on the surface of a paint-covered canvas. The paintings' arched shape suggests an idea of tapestry, a very important decorative element of the Spanish Baroque (Galería Álvaro Alcázar 2015).

19 Gow Langsford Gallery (Auckland).

20 Álvaro Alcázar Gallery (Madrid).

Sometimes, Murado gives his paintings titles with historical connotations, such as *1492* (2004),²¹ the reference to the very important year in the history of Spain which saw the end of the Reconquista and the voyage of Christopher Columbus. The impressive dimensions of this diptych, about 3 × 4 meters, convey the sense of significance of this year and its almost monochrome composition painted in ochre and amber might allude to the vast prairies of the New Continent (Solana 2004).

The study of classic iconography and techniques plays an important role in the artist's work. In his blog and other social media, for instance his Instagram account, Antonio Murado often shows his sources of inspiration together with his own paintings. Thus, we can observe that some Murado curvilinear gestures are drawn from the emotional corporal moves of Antonio Canova's neoclassical sculptures, or his sweeping movements bring to mind El Greco's bold brushwork. In addition, as part of his study of great masters, Murado occasionally makes copies after them, for instance, after Francisco Goya.

Antonio Murado's work embraces multiple genres, but landscape is the recurrent theme. His landscapes include different imagined spaces, such as frozen areas, *Paisaje helado* (Frozen Landscape) (2001);²² green deserted valleys, *Schohaire County* (2005);²³ sombre sands, *Paisaje arenoso* (Sand Landscape) (2001);²⁴ or seascapes, *Jerusalem* (2005).²⁵ His landscapes are silent and uninhabitable, which embodies the concept of the sublime (D'Souza 2002, 56). Indeed, Murado's landscapes at the same time evoke Abstract Expressionist brushstrokes and feelings found in Casper David Friedrich, the master of the sublime (Hatchadoorian 2001, 5, 8; Johnston 2001). Suffice it to recall Friedrich's canvases such as *The Monk by the Sea* (1808-1810) or *The Sea of Ice* (1823-1824). Murado's works bring about the same emotional response as does the spiritual world of nature seen in the landscapes of other celebrated painters of Romanticism, for instance John Constable's *Rainstorm over the Sea* (1824-1828) or Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Sunrise with Sea Monsters* (1845).

Murado's inclination for landscape blends with the long tradition of landscape painting in Galicia and is connected to one of the aspects of Galician identity, the traditional sentimental attachment of Galician people to their land. It is well known that Galicia has a unique and magnificent natural world and that it is of great importance in the real and symbolic life

21 ABANCA Art Collection.

22 Fundación María José Jove Art Collection.

23 ABANCA Art Collection.

24 Afundación Art Collection.

25 ABANCA Art Collection.

of Galicians. Moreover, landscape in Galicia is not merely a set of visible distinctive geographical features, but has an important symbolic value, which has played an important role in the collective shaping of Galician identity. Ramón Otero Pedrayo, an outstanding Galician intellectual, one of the key members of *Xeración Nós*,²⁶ in his entire body of work constantly stressed the intimate connection between the Galicians and their land, landscape and natural world (Patterson 2006, 45). Although the trope of Galician land worship has often been stereotyped (Miguélez-Carballeira 2013, 2), it has been very important for Galician identity and has found its expression in the visual arts. Since the second part of the nineteenth century, the landscape genre has been paramount for Galician painting, with such painters as Ovidio Murguía, Serafín Avedaño, Imeldo Corral, Francisco Llorens (López Bernández 2005, 106). Their artworks expressed an almost sacred communion with nature and served as important references to Galicianness, that is, the collective sentiment of belonging to Galicia and the set of distinctive attributes of the Galician people.

Among other affective aspects of Galicianness there are some important cultural constructs strongly related to the history of Galician emigration: *morriña*, the feeling of sadness when away from home, and *saudade*, the feeling of longing and melancholy. These emotions, similar to the sentimental bond between Galician people and their land, have been stereotyped in popular culture, but nevertheless they remain recurrent markers of Galician identity. These emotions, together with values such as “spontaneity”, “averseness to rational thinking” (Miguélez-Carballeira 2014, 6), “an innate capacity for poetry”, “an aloof humour”, “being astute and reserved” (2) are considered amongst the attributes of Galician people. In my opinion, it might be possible to see some of these emotions in Murado’s paintings. His landscapes seem to me to convey a light melancholy and a meditative, somewhat mysterious, mood, while his monochrome works painted with bold brushstrokes seem to me hide passion behind outward restraint.

Being a renowned international artist with artworks located in museums, art galleries and corporate collections around the globe,²⁷ Antonio Murado is simultaneously considered a prominent contemporary Galician painter. The important Galician museums and private foundations such as the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea and the private art collections of the Galician financial corporation ABANCA (the Colección ABANCA and the Colección de Afundación) hold Murado’s artworks in their permanent collections. Although the direct references to Galicia in Murado’s art are

26 A cultural and political movement of the 1920s, crucial for the development of Galicianism.

27 The Museo de Bellas Artes de Alava, Vitorio, Spain; The Nagasaki Art Museum, Japan; and in collections of Phillip Morris, American Express, Chase Manhattan Bank, AXA, Pfizer, the Coca-Cola Corporation (Gow Langsford Gallery 2017, 161), and in the renewed World Trade Centre in NYC.

generally rather subtle, his disposition to paint landscapes and the presence of a particular atmosphere in his works can be seen as a part of Galicianness, as I have argued above.

5 Conclusion

The discussion of the works and artistic careers of sculptor Francisco Leiro and painter Antonio Murado shows the local and global dimensions of their trajectories, and exemplifies some of the current approaches to Galician culture. Both creators are acclaimed artists in the global art scene with artworks located all around the world. Working as successful artists in New York, Leiro and Murado embody the globalizing processes of migration, and changes in living and working patterns, including the global circulation of contemporary art. In this way, it would be possible to say that these artists illustrate the notion 'deterritorialization' applied to Galician culture. The global dimension of the trajectories of Leiro and Murado is not only conditioned by the fact they live in New York and are represented at the global art market. These Galician artists incorporate many international art trends into their work and share a common interest in universal values, which mark their work as global. Having distinct styles and following different aesthetic principles, they both emotionally react to current problems of humankind. While Leiro passionately narrates human suffering and anxieties, Murado's art may be seen as a sanctuary in which to meditate and find safety from pain and angst.

At the same time, Leiro and Murado are celebrated artists in Galicia, where the landmark contemporary art institutions hold their artworks in the permanent collections. They maintain their ties with their native land and exhibit in Galicia regularly. Moreover, their art expresses many different facets of Galicianness, although this tendency is more patent in the case of Francisco Leiro. Leiro often makes direct Galician references, through his techniques, the choice of materials, particular iconography and subject matter, while Antonio Murado's allusions to Galician context are for the most part rather subtle. Nevertheless, certain aspects of Galician identity, such as a spiritual connection between humans and nature, an innate disposition to sensitivity, melancholy, mysticism and a very particular sense of humour, can be identified in the oeuvre of both creators. With all this, their work has gone beyond the geopolitical limits of Galicia and, therefore, Francisco Leiro's and Antonio Murado's artistic paths might be seen as an example of the 'deperipheralization' of Galician culture. Also, their example remind us that Galician cultural practices are not confined to the mainstream narrative forms, such as literature or cinema, and Galicianness might be conveyed by means of contemporary visual arts, which once again brings to mind the idea of 'deperipheralization' of Galician Cultural Studies.

The analysis of Leiro's and Murado's work, similar to other modern cultural productions from Galicia, defies oppositional binaries, which also conforms with one of the current trends in the field of Galician Cultural Studies. Their artistic production is not only an intersection of the local and global, but also a juxtaposition of the personal and collective, traditional and modern, abstract and figurative, classic and popular. Francisco Leiro and Antonio Murado belong to both sides of the Atlantic, they both epitomise the process of cultural globalization, and from their position in New York these artists make Galician culture visible at the international level.

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