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Susana Talayero's exhibition at Bilbao, Galeria Vanguardia and Milan, Istituto Cervantes

Aviary and Insectarium Fantasies

Susana Talayero creates scenes and environments teeming with images of bird-like and invertebrate beings. In making these creatures she is not motivated by impulses toward universal brotherhood or the notion that we are all on board a single ark.

Her point of departure is the aleatory adventure of shaping found materials, which appear to turn up in response to an urge to redeem the discarded; by giving it life in new forms. A mass of used and binned microfilms, found in the street, becomes the vehicle and medium for her imagery. Scratched, scored and scraped, painted over, joined sequentially or used as multiple transparencies, they turn into filmstrips of the Never Never Land that wells up from the bestiaries of the subconscious.

The fantasy takes on three dimensions with the reworking of the discards from a rubber factory that turns out tires and waterproof boots. The chance that the plant has a bird name, Gaviota, signifying seagull, points Talayero in an ornithological direction.

The remnants of the sheets of rubber that have been cut up to make the soles of the boots have the appearance of shoals of parameciums or clusters of beetles. These could be bird food. They are grouped to make compositions of lower life forms. Or they are twisted singly into something more dominant, with the semblance of birds in their more reptilian aspects.

In keeping with the contemporary presence of materials like microfilm and the rubber remnants, Talayero often uses sheets of acetate as supports for her painted compositions and collages. They offer the transparency that gives her work extra dimensions like a medium - air, water, ectoplasm - in which her creatures can have their existence.

When Susana Talayero read a report that hitherto unknown varieties of insects had been discovered in Romenian caves and they proved to be eyeless, since they lived in the dark, and had a physiology that did not require sunlight, but subsisted on invisible chemicals, she felt an immediate analogy with her own creations. After all they emerged from un sentient lower depths and were nourished by materials otherwise not considered nutrient.

Further reflection suggested that her creatures constituted a cycle like the biological food chains. Her sculptures of twisted, knotted rubber, shaped like beetles, butterflies, dragonflies, scorpions and millepedes, could be seen as the bird food of her ornithological creations.

Like the Romenian caves, the Talayero environments have a life of their own, mysterious, full of character and some of the dark beauty of their creator.