Battistozzi, Ana María, "Miguel Harte: encanto y repulsión juntos" [Miguel Harte: Enchantment and repulsion together], *Revista Ñ*, May 27, 2022.

Conceived as an installation, for the first time an exhibition brings together works by the artist from 1989 to the present. Magical worlds, insects and eroticism coexist on satin surfaces

The world—or rather the worlds—of Miguel Harte possess an enchantment that forces one to adjust perception to different scales. From the small drop that slides, almost imperceptible, on a white surface and the tiny winged beings enclosed in craters and bubbles, to the larger scale of animated trees—lamps—bugs, Harte's forms can disturb with their dark interior or fascinate with the overflow of a golden liquid like a tongue about to lick the spectator.

Rare enchantment from which it is difficult to escape. Something that pivots between the lyricism of his fairy worlds, the eroticism that throbs in the sensuality of the forms and can reach the grotesque seduction of a self-portrait as dominator: the garden gnome with a perverse smile.

One could say that since 1989, the starting point in the artist's production that encompasses the temporality of this exhibition, Harte's work has been seen in specific chapters. Never all together in its variety of materials, scales and approaches as it is seen now in the large compartmentalized room of Museo Coleccion de Arte Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat.

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The question activated the exhibition proposal of curator Santiago Villanueva in the sense of these aspects in the artist's work that he highlights by emphasizing differences in scale to the point of deliberately making the approach to the works uncomfortable. Especially those in which Harte creates minimum universes inside transparencies. Precisely pieces that demand attention adjusted to the measure of their scale. Impossible to access those inner worlds of ants, beetles pierced by small spears without submitting to a delayed act of contemplation that can yield the marvelous or the monstrous. This is what Harte's small artificial natures demand. They confront us with spaces that fascinate our gaze and at the same time can provoke feelings of repulsion. In this sense, Harte's work has been developing a growing complexity that we are given to observe in these transparencies as small vaults of wonders. From the initial tears-drops of the early 90s, located in the first instance, to the bubbles, craters and orifices with threatening contents about to overflow, these worlds not only demand special attention but it is difficult to imagine that any approach that aims to make it difficult.

Thus, the place occupied by the series *Burbujas de vidrio* such as *Coral de abejas* and *Illuminati* in the Museo Fortabat exhibition does not cease to surprise, literally cornered on the floor in a sector of the exhibition to the point of forcing the visitor to sprawl to access the surprising

scenes inside.

Could it be that Santiago Villanueva sought to recreate in the visitor the perspective of the child observer of bugs, holes and weeds that fed Harte's imagination?

In the opposite angle, the display of animal lamp forms naturally imposes its presence without major difficulties. It gives the impression that the exhibition as a whole has been conceived by the curator as a large installation in which each piece by the artist functions as a part of his own design, beyond whether this contributes or not to the experience of certain works, as occurs particularly with those already mentioned. Visiting an exhibition implies being interested in its contents as much as opening oneself to the experiences proposed to the public. Hence, creative arbitrariness is welcome in a curation, as long as it does not conspire with the work itself, which is the raison d'être of any exhibition project.

Harte accepted this proposal that offers uncomfortable perspectives to the visitor. Because "it works as if it represented a great mental plane in which all the possibilities of my work are deployed," the artist admitted to Ñ. A task that is effectively fulfilled.

The arrangement of interior worlds is uncomfortable. On the right, *Accidente domestico*, 1999. Especially regarding the multiple visions provided by the diverse scales and uses of materials applied with progressively imaginative and bold biases.

Oil on canvas, synthetic enamel, quail eggshell, polyester resin, formica, Martilux paint, plastic laminates, expanded polyurethane. Practically none of this refers to materials recognized as artistic. To this should be added Harte's pertinacious exploration that did not disdain incorporating a wide variety of insects. Nothing to envy an entomologist's collection. And all in function of a narrative logic that does not stop at the mere material question and only admits as north to expand the directions of a fantasy filled with curiosity and also eroticism as in *Masa Cerebral*, 2013. Two-layer paint on polyester resin with fiberglass, 92 x 30 x 40 cm.

Even faced with the abstract and purely material I tend toward a narrative—clarifies the artist—by mere ambition to give life to matter. A life that contemplates mutations of state and form. Something that is noticed in pieces like *Materia cerebral* a kind of gelatinous magma of satin tone that would seem about to slide from the place it occupies. Seduction and apprehension is what it provokes, a fairly frequent experience in this artist's production.

Thus from the first works in formica with little tears-drops, his imaginative impulse led him to include insects and strange beings with something human and something insect. And that world, which germinated inside the drops, came out into space.

The *Jardin filosofico* from 1993 was one of the first works in which the lyricism of Harte's interior worlds burst forth on a larger scale without losing any of its charm. A transparent pyramid endowed with an exterior of roots and an interior with a small lake, whose waters swirl

and a small being that approaches. Polyester resin, formica, expanded polyurethane, the non-artistic materials that Harte uses.

It is a key piece in the leap into space that Harte made until reaching the dimensions of the rotund presence of *Bicho-Agujero-Pozo* from 2015.

The visions on a larger or smaller scale in each case were suggested by the very manipulation of the materials. True inspirers of forms halfway between science and fantasy. Thus the strange *Criaturas* that are born inside a tree can grow until they themselves become mollusk trees. All on a satin skin surface akin to an amusement park aesthetic.

Surfaces are and have been one of Harte's greatest concerns. From polished formicas and Martilux recreating seas with schools of strange beings that appear through craters and crevices.

In this sense, Harte's work has been inhabited from very early on by an infinity of holes and orifices that, as Santiago Villanueva points out, can refer to the anal. But much more so to those orifices and crevices that are formed among the weeds or inside the trees. Dark sites of mystery that can become a kind of dwelling for ants, dwarfs or giant slugs and worms. Such is what happens in the most recent works in the exhibition.

For them, Harte rescued some logs that he kept for years and turns them into a site invaded by slugs with satin skin that, once again, attract and repulse us in that return of the repressed that hovers over much of this artist's work.