Sánchez, Julio, *Miguel Harte. Críticos y Pintores*, [exhibition catalogue], Librería Clásica y Moderna, Buenos Aires, October 13 - November 13, 1992.

The Urn of a Poor Child

I was walking along the wall of the Ezpeleta cemetery looking for calla lilies, or a little plastic flower wreath with the inscription "We will always remember you." In a flower shop I saw a children's urn made of Formica. It imitated green onyx. I thought that in another context it could be a work by Miguel Harte. When I go down the stairs in the subway I see the fluorescent tubes on the ceiling and can't help but smile thinking of Dan Flavin. The torn posters on the walls remind me of Mimmo Rotella, and the urinals of Marcel Duchamp. As I entered the cemetery I wondered if the "gap" between life and art that Rauschenberg talked about had finally disappeared. At least it comforts me to know that after Pop and Minimalism, objects have generated a new space for aesthetic reflection.

Proletarian Luxury

Harte's painting-objects made with Formica captivated me through their exacerbation of the epidermal. They were pure skin, without flesh or blood flow. There was so much skin that it made you want to tear it with an arrow like a Saint Sebastian or with a Mishima-style seppuku, to make them bleed, to eviscerate them. Yet Harte inflicted barely a scratch on them or spilled a tiny drop of resin (tear or ejaculation?).

Formica is something vulgar, with marble pretensions, the luxury of the poor. It doesn't even cover wood, only particleboard made of sawdust and glue. It meets all the conditions for kitsch, but Harte takes more advantage of its muteness, the absence of metaphor, its half-hearted coldness and its diffuse reflection.

The Viewer Discovers

Martilux is a paint used for safes and motors. In his latest works, Harte pours it over wood, creating a hammered surface effect. A more bourgeois version of Formica, a less proletarian luxury?

Drops continue to fall on the surface, but the attentive viewer discovers tiny characters with bulging eyes and rather big noses. Looking at Harte, you don't have to be very perceptive to recognize his self-portrait. Or his self-caricature? The *Hartecitos* (little Hartes) are protected by bubbles; wrapped in amniotic fluid they look like little fetuses gazing at the world. In earlier works he used eggshells—another skin, another embryonic form—with eyes. Eye-eggs? Before and now, always the gaze from the womb.

A large monochrome surface, but swirling, movement petrified. Exploring this surface—lunar, planetary, blood plasma?—the Hartecitos (little Hartes) appear. In the vortex of the world, in the Heraclitean pantarei, they watch unfazed, isolate themselves, masturbate, they're like the Primitive Voyeur of Genesis. On another planet, without a bubble (or after it's been popped?),

they drown and desperate little hands emerge. In the Sea of Martilux they're lures trying to catch a story, an anecdote, a moral, something that won't leave the image all alone.

Ite Missa Est

When I entered the cemetery a pile of stacked jars reminded me of Arman and a woman praying to a Duane Hanson sculpture. A little boy next to his grandfather's grave was scribbling à la Joan Miró. I took a vase with water to put the calla lilies in and from the bottom I thought I saw the smile of a big-nosed man with bulging eyes. I don't know who it reminded me of.