



**SAMUEL SALCEDO**

**ANIMAL THRILLS**

Anaid Art Gallery  
Joachimstraße 7  
D-10119, Berlin-Mitte

03 March – 22nd April, 2016  
Opening hours: Tues – Sa, 12 – 6 pm



Waning Moon, 2014  
Installation: resine, polyester  
Dimensions: 150 x 150 x 50 cm

A (figurative) 21<sup>th</sup> century artist

Juan Bufill

Is there a 21<sup>st</sup> century figurative art form? Is there a figurative sculpture and painting that represent our time?

I think Samuel Salcedo's work is one of the best examples of figurative art that can be found at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and that the value of his contribution is that this sculptor and painter from Barcelona manages to express in his work a profound and yet fun, lighthearted reflection on the human condition, on the meaning of human existence in our interesting, strange and sometimes stupid civilization.

Salcedo avoids a solemn tone and represents as a dramatic comedy the matters that to other people would be tragic or even boring. And he does so with the joy of someone who is free of certain vanities that are the foundation of our pretentious society, with the clarity of someone who is free from self-deception and accepts the ridiculous part

and the limitations of being human. But before focusing on his work I am going to allow myself a historic "flash back".

In contemporary art there has been a strange resignation or repression, that is not usually perceived as such and that therefore is worth noting. For centuries, artists were at the service of political, religious and economic powers. The compulsory themes were scenes from the Bible and classical mythology and the praise of the established power and bourgeois wealth. They had no creative freedom, although some of them took liberties and today we can admire masterpieces by Vermeer, Rembrandt, Bosch or Leonardo. The modern liberation of Goya, Van Gogh, Munch and others was not fully achieved until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with the historical avant-gardes, and later, in the 60's, with the advent of pop art and libertarian attitudes.



Once the long-desired artistic freedom was finally achieved, what has been done with it? Well, after the creative explosion of avant-garde (Dada, Surrealism, etc.) and after the destructive explosion of the Second World War, something amazing happened: most of the contemporary figurative painters and sculptors stopped to make full use of this newly conquered freedom of representation. Pop art images were often used as advertising and media stereotypes and rarely dealt with personal and subjective aspects in depth. And realistic figures were almost always self-limited to the obvious and the academic. The truth is that once this freedom was achieved, only a few figurative painters and sculptors (Balthus, Bacon) were able to make the most of it. Other art forms took over, such as photography, comics and film. However, in the past three decades, a new subjective and metarealist figuration has emerged and does make full use of that freedom. The Dutch painter Pat Andrea is one of its pioneers and among young people, Samuel Salcedo is one of the best international exponents.

One of the first things that draws attention in his work is that it conveys an extraordinary sense of freedom. I think this is partly because he dares to contemplate the human species with critical and self-critical distance,

with an ironic vision on the most grotesque, ridiculous or naïve aspects of it, but always avoiding judgment from an alleged superiority. Salcedo not only makes use of this freedom of figurative representation. When portraying today's human being, he also shows a complete liberation from any kind of hypocritical moralism, whether traditional, old, or those that are spread by a certain progressive way of thinking hindered by clichés.

For its technical virtuosity and sometimes transgressive contents, one could connect the work of Salcedo with Maurizio Cattelan or with hyperrealist artist Ron Mueck, but it would be a superficial view. Salcedo does not focus on anecdote and impact. The meaning of his work is more ambiguous and is closer to Nietzsche: the recognition of reality, as a whole, including the worst and the ridiculous, the recognition of the all too human and the insufficiently superhuman in this pretentious little animal called man (or woman). Salcedo manages to represent the human being as an animal (he undresses him) and at the same time as a creature who needs distractions and gifts, as a deficient being who needs to buy additional objects: profane masks, fiction objects and psychological prostheses suitable for a post-natural being, substitutes maybe for what has been called the paradise lost.

Partner

