

Hasta que el pueblo las canta, las coplas, coplas no son

Marta Fernández Calvo's work is made up of the very substance of life: situations, circumstances, personal experience and a sincere yearning to share.

The studied lightness of her gaze is a product of clear-cut ideas and the decision to fully express the present, with a keen awareness of the time, place and condition of the life now being lived, including its contradictions: difficulties cannot be shirked.

In the exhibition *Hasta que el pueblo las canta, las coplas, coplas no son* [Folk Songs Are Not Folks Songs Until the People Sing Them], Fernández Calvo has read the gallery space, inside and out, and infused it with her own feelings and her own everyday reality—a reality in which her work as an artist intersects with her ordinary needs, thus becoming a metaphor for a broader contemporary condition.

On opening day the interior of the gallery will be a field of action, and a burst of energy will flood every corner.

The works on display will be accompanied by two performances staged on the gallery's balconies overlooking the courtyard. This spatial expansion beyond the boundaries of the walls seems to underscore the need to always remember that art and life are intertwined, an idea that constitutes the very core of the artist's philosophy.

The first performance is an expression of the desire to celebrate life and the exhibition itself.

The artist's ties to the land of her birth are evident in this piece, which consists of a *jota* performed by Paqui Terroba, a singer whom the artist has invited to travel to Madrid from the region that both women call home, La Rioja. Fernández Calvo takes great proprietary pride in the *jota* as part of her cultural heritage; for her, this regional folk music is bound up with her own personal history, with "those years when an individual learns to live and celebrate". Sung on the outward-facing balcony, the *jota* is a powerful statement that entails an elevated vantage point, a position and a stance, a sense of balanced harmony with the setting: a stability born of individual life.

In the second performance, a "bow" will be handed to a cellist who will then use it to improvise a composition on the spot. The "bow" is actually a strip of wood taken from one of the balcony window frames and rubbed against the outer walls of the gallery to wear it down. The gap left in the frame can be covered and the strip will return to its place, but only after it has been transformed into something precious and proved its hitherto unimaginable potential to create musical sounds.

These two performances will draw our attention outwards, and fresh air will rush into the gallery through the open windows.

When the performances are done, vestiges of them will remain in the locations where they took place: the musician's chair in the centre of the room, facing the window, will become a strategic place to sit and observe; and a mat will mark the spot where the singer belted out her *jota*.

At the end of the show visitors will find a white paper tablecloth with a pattern that the artist printed along the edges using the reduction method and on which she has invited a chef to

work her culinary magic. She inserts this minimal operation in a world of poetry, a world not unconsciously formed but deliberately sought: a symbol of all unproductive acts, which may be useless but are nevertheless necessary, like art itself. But the work also narrates our contemporary economic and historical dimension, in which so much energy is squandered: a tale of wasted potential. And that dimension is elevated to the status of artwork thanks to its verticality and active association with the idea of the frame.

An audio piece plays constantly in the background: it is the voice of the man for whom Marta has baked cakes to make ends meet ever since she moved to Madrid. The soundtrack contaminates the entire exhibition, altering what should be a contemplative atmosphere, just as that pragmatic yet indispensable baking job contaminates her life as an artist. Loud, clear, brutal and unavoidable even in the remotest corners of the gallery, that voice brings us face to face with reality and its contradictions, with the artist's daily life, stripped of special effects. It reminds us that art—and the artist—exists in a world of economic and social relations.

In this exhibition/proposal, Fernández Calvo has boldly chosen to forego simulation and fiction, reject special effects and stage nothing but raw, naked reality.

However, that reality does not prevent her from emphasising moments of poetry, for they too exist. "I bake cakes because I like working in pyjamas", she writes on the gallery wall. Comfort, homebody mentality, the idea of working with whatever is at hand: these are the sources of the sense of earthy warmth and magic that inspires the art of Marta FC. In these precarious times, when what counts is not the uncertain future but the present, as announced in the title, the here and now has become an existential condition. Now is when the performance emerges, encompassing the temporal dimension of life; and now is when works appear that are tenuous and fleeting but not spontaneous, for they are the product of reflection, sedimentation and the mastery of a personal artistic vocabulary and grammar.

Thence come elements like music and cooking, activities related to childhood memories and original settings: vehicles of relationships, shared experiences, instances of everyday life.

Thence comes the levity, poetry and irony with which Marta Fernández Calvo, in articulating this exhibition—a self-portrait, but also the portrait of a generation—voices her plea for a liveable world where lightness, fullness and consciousness can coexist.

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