

English



La jarra vertiente o Máquina de dibujar, 1980

LUIS FRANGELLA.

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La jarra vertiente o Máquina de dibujar (The Gushing Jug or Drawing Machine) provides the title to this exhibition that brings together thirty-two pieces by Luis Frangella (Buenos Aires, 1944 – New York, 1990) created between 1980 and 1989. The work by this genuine, immanent artist walks a fine line between abstraction and a constant challenge to figurative art.

An architect by training, Luis Frangella started to explore his artistic side in the early 1970s, during his time at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), where he met Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Maryanne Amacher and John Cage. He later moved permanently to New York, where he died prematurely at the age of 46.

This exhibition shows the different languages explored by Frangella in the 1980s, from the first primordially experimental pieces, mainly on the study of objects and their proportions, to the pictorial pieces he worked on during a second period.

La jarra vertiente o Máquina de dibujar is also the title of one of the pieces on show and illustrates his figurative approach to experimenting with objects. Frangella's work is groundbreaking and yet also faithful to tradition – a difficult combination which the artist solves through an eclectic range of metaphysical-aesthetic equations.

Frangella plays with physical phenomena. And we use the verb 'play' in its full sense: to carry out any action simply to have fun. Referring to the series of drawings of a rotating head, Ángel González's text in the catalogue maintains that the artist isn't trying to explore the different sides of the same object; he simply, genuinely, wants to play with shapes and movement. And this playful urge is clear in all of Frangella's artistic expressions, from painting to sculpture and three-dimensional experiments.

The piece *Metamorfosis* [*Metamorphosis*] reveals that everything is susceptible to change, that "the poet is 'the guardian of metamorphoses'", in the words of Ángel González quoting writer Elias Canetti, and that "surely this is even truer of the artist". A set of male genitals turned into a cowboy boot is one of the metamorphic sequences created by Frangella, who, by making the shape evolve, changes the conception of the object.

The three-dimensional experiments undoubtedly echo his interests as an architect. He uses two processes that González describes in his text: tomographs and anaglyphs. Tomographs are superposed sequences of drawings on acetate that create a volume image, as in *Cono* [*Cone*] and *Hat* (1989), for example. Anaglyphs are early efforts to produce what we know today as three-dimensional images: red and green drawings viewed through special glasses. *Cuchillos* [*Knives*] (1986) should be viewed through

an intricate viewer with two-colour glasses. Viewers' gaze is met with the image of looming, threatening knives. "Since we didn't appear to be seeing things with volume and weight but rather their empty, floating structures, the way in which those two-dimensional figures suddenly, albeit rather craftily, became three dimensional had a somewhat threatening and even aggressive effect, which in the case of *Cuchillos* in 1986 must have been carefully calculated by the artist", writes González.

A somewhat tragic atmosphere hangs over the final gallery, which shows *In the blink of an eye* (1986) and the series of candles that get gradually smaller and smaller from picture to picture until they disappear. Time as a concept is inevitably linked to movement and change, and Frangella manages to express something difficult, if not impossible in painting: the passage of time. His friend María Vela Zanetti called this series *Reloj de velas* [*Candle Clock*] and even dedicated a series of poems to it.

Frangella's work weaves together reflection on apparent reality, its empirical shift towards other coordinates and its final metamorphosis that reveals that everything can change and placidly coexist by respecting both the banal and sublime, the sacred and the profane, the decorative and the disgusting, the heroic and the grotesque, in the words of his good friend Quico Rivas

In short, his work is flooded with transparencies, resonances and illusory effects, almost certainly the result of his extensive knowledge of the physical properties of light, weight, movement, balance, symmetry and rhythm, together with his slow, meticulous research. As spectators, we are kept constantly alert and interact with the artist through the vision and echo of authentic, austere, essential, cautionary work.

LUIS FRANGELLA. *La jarra vertiente o Máquina de dibujar*

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