

Jorge Luís Marzo

Forms, forms... Kurtz would say. Catalonia is deeply formalist. Catalonia is formalist even when it represents blood, evicted in a coat of arms where a dimwit thought of writing the story of his death with his four fingers full of blood. Formalism even in death. Because death has to mean something, it has to iconise something. Like September 11th, where the death of a common idea is celebrated. And everyone is happy to represent suffering and victimism. Victimism can only be represented with symbols, never with ideas. Catalonia is as formalist as it could be. Everyone complained, during the Fifth Centennial celebrations of the discovery of America, about the king not saying a word about the calamities created in America. But the busts of the Marquis of Comillas and of Count Güell continue unmoved in our streets, without even a graffiti. Think that the boats that took the blacks there were Catalan. When victimism is associated to amnesia, fascism is born. Scandalised? Not at all! Only a little hurt, but it will not last long. All this is so formal that it kills.

The formalism that we have here stinks. You did not realise why we do live well, and you think that forms are only this, icons and symbols that we create, and that do not have anything to do with reality. We are so brain-washed that we believe it all, even that forms are only this, forms. And we have the *Govern* of the *Generalitat* (Autonomous government of Catalonia) gathered in the Tàpies room. Only forms.

We belong to a formalist society, therefore you think that our art must also be formal, because art has to reflect what a society is. And you have all the right to think so. The Art created here is formalist art, because it wants to imitate what it originates from. And it is very good at it. As it imitates its source, it becomes an evidence that nobody can watch thoroughly, it becomes something obvious that nobody is up to state. Because, why do we need to state what is evident? You keep asking yourself.

Formalism, of course, is based on form. And you like that. You like that a lot. Because, why should you question what comes from the inside, what is original, what is dictated by experience? But do we have any experience in this field? None. Because you have killed even the illusion of the experimentation with so much experience and security in your voice. We are doing fine. We have cash (we give more than we receive, you always say), we have peace, there are no shootings, and everybody likes Barcelona and Salou. Many things fall apart, but it does not matter, they fall apart because they cannot maintain themselves, not because you tear them down. We are going through the same process as with Franco. The anaesthesia of the daily power submits everything to the empire of the form, a form that is honourable because it respects identity, our old and well installed identity. We have a formalist culture, not because we do deserve it, as some of our fascist historians say, but because we believe that this is the only way to convert us into culture. As if culture had this goal: to be converted into culture. It is sad.

When you see art, you see culture, you cannot see anything else, and you are right to a large extent. Because the majority of the art produced here is only this, culture. Those who criticise you are not producing culture, but critic. The same as the fool in the hospital that, when he complains, you think that he does it because he is crazy, not because therapy hurts. You fill up your mouth with this sweet flavour. When you watch television, you are watching culture. When you see Pujol, you are confronted to political culture. Everything is filtered through your enthusiasm in front of culture. Sadly, you are also right. In your world, everything is culture. Like a black hole that absorbs everything, and that dedicates the rest of the time after eating, to clean the toilet from shades of shit. Even this cleaning, you call culture.

Formalism is culture because it identifies the things of life, and labels them. Formalism is an orderly fascism because it cleans the street from everything that is not healthy, everything that does not represent the community itself. The cleansing that we have here, you call it consensus...

I call it paranoia. You are (yes, we are) paranoid about order and forms, forms of order. You are obsessed by blood stains on big signs, and you call this Catalanian design. You are obsessed by works of art that you do not want to understand, because the magic is bad only when its trick is discovered and you are not into letting the show be ruined. What would we get if the show disappears? We watch the Barça on TV3 because we do not care about the Barça, what counts is the show. We see the MACBA because it should be seen now, because we know that we care very little about what it contains, as our art is an art of evidences, and nobody wants to spend time with such «insignificance».

Formalism makes rime with daddyism, and with so many other things that legitimate your modernity, your elite poetry about life, and most of all, about culture of a rimed society, that does not have anything to do with street culture. In your eagerness to have the jigsaw completed, you do not realise that there is always a piece missing, a piece that has always been missing. And when you realise this, you start looking for it, as if it has happened naturally, as if it had fallen between the toy shop and home. Therefore, you do not even notice the thimblerrigors who, with names of politicians, hide the reality. We see the MACBA, because they have put it there so we can see it, so we will not see anything else. While you relax, facing the media chimney, lying nonchalantly, a brutal ultraliberal strategy sneaks through the door into your house. Suddenly, all the institutions relax and remain quiet. They have achieved what they wanted. While critics against liberal strategies in Madrid are instigated, they have achieved what they wanted. They have torn down any artistic policy, any intent to refund the structures. There is nothing, absolutely nothing left. They have taken away almost everything. There is always something left, just in case things change. It is always good to have something left in the freezer, just in case there is too much heat. But we are so full of air conditioned that I find it difficult to think in the heat.

We all carry on doing our things, more or less successfully. We repeat this to ourselves continuously. But this is also the slogan that we hear the

politicians vociferate constantly. If everything follows its course, why should we interfere? Of course, those who do not want to interfere would take any excuse as valid. The thing is that, what have they done it for! The jigsaw is big and it takes an awful lot of time to finish it. There is a big part of blue sky, that makes it even more difficult to identify the pieces. And when you have finished you discover that it is not really finished, and that besides, the image that appears is the Liceu's, some amusement park, or an excursion to the Canigó. The Canigó in Delta planing. The Comedians on the facades. Facades.

The Generalitat left nothing. Or almost nothing. They put everything in the MACBA. They have that tic of those who got rid of an annoying weight. Because the street has always been a weight over the Generalitat's shoulders. And with the MACBA, they have even cleaned the street. Now, they seem happy when they see the Moroccan children riding their bicycles, or the Filipino mothers chatting while sitting on the museum ramps. Consensus and political wisdom. The Department of Culture is a hygienic institution. It cleans art from edges, and it provides culture, and splendour. Meanwhile, it creates non-existing problems, such as the language (the jigsaw, the jigsaw...), and buys things, like the Riera Collection, giving the impression that just because it bought it, it is more of a collection. Again and again with the Riera Collection. While we work on the jigsaw, we do not realise that this has mortgaged the budget for years. The years that it takes to finish the jigsaw, even more, because the jigsaw will take more.

I am saying that the Generalitat left nothing. Yes, you are right. Because there is not such a thing as the Generalitat. Because we have an Institutional Revolutionary Party that moves through chequebooks, payable after 9 months, of course (That much did the posh Catalan emigrants to Mexico learn?). I would never have imagined that they would be so courageous to say in public that culture, which means everything in Catalonia, has to do with clients. With the people who set the exhibitions, and who are not paid with cash, but with more exhibitions; with

commissioners like me who have to take all this shit because they have to survive –and because we think that shit tastes better if there is money involved in it-; with artists who dream of making shit sweeter and innocuous, or the contrary, with artists who think that shit «ben plantada» (well planted) could become radioactive.

Well-being means culture. Comas means Villatoro. Well-being means journalism, and culture is a cathodic screen. Because forms invade it all. All relies on a concept of petulant decency that could be interpreted by James Stewart. This guy must have been Catalanian, offering sweets to the little country children, who live next to highways, telling them that they are also a part of the culture, but clean culture, without precipices, without earthquakes, telling them that they are good contributors, good street «voluntaris» (volunteers) from the neighbourhoods. What a good people we have. They follow that idea of progress, that idea of an open and integrating Catalonia! How wonderful is people we have in this country; a country that adopts gestures, our symbols, your rusty blood! Forms, forms, and more forms. Forms of imperialism without empire. Icons of shit without shit.

Catalonian art is fundamentally a right wing activity, because it is related to a historic and to a theological notion of time, where nothing is left but a cleansing of what refuses to be timeless. Catalonia is 1000 years old. The Barça, almost 100. The well-being relies on Foundations, on maps, and on dictionaries. And art in the foundries; in places where consensus, understanding, forgiveness, and amnesia are forged. Foundries with air conditioning, fondues where meat melts in boiling oil, though preserved by the ventilators. But, amazingly! The meat keeps tasting like meat. Terrifying prestidigitation exercise.

I am confused. What about you? I am confused because I am trying to vomit and everything I get is good, it tastes fine. Because tomorrow I will feel better. Because if I am down there now, it is just because I have been up, and if I am up now, it is because I have been down. The pendulum works in front of our eyes and relaxes us. It confirms us our goodness, our essential forms.

Because when we speak, we speak truly. We have a language that is so impulsive, so much ours, that we do not need translation, everyone understands us. Again with ventriloquy! Because there is no ventriloquy in Catalan. We have pure forms, so why should we contaminate them? Why should we play on denying our forms if they still respond to what we do, live, and say? We are saturated with identity, with negotiation, because we only can pact from the security of what we are. And we know well what we want. We want a culture and an art that show us how much we know about ourselves, and how great is our capacity to decode the others, because decoding is only possible when the other does not know much about himself or herself. That is why we love to guess. Because we know that we can get it right depending on how much we know. When we only know what we buy.

I have the feeling that you are right when you say that you are inalterable, that your things are essential, religious, convergent. Because I also have the feeling that if things have not changed in so much time, they will not change in the time to come. A time that you do not know, but that you have planned not to know, What a strategy! So everybody is happy, because they know that you are not planning anything, that you do not want to be bothered with what can happen in the future... because things happen by themselves, and you will respond depending on how things will occur. And everything will be all right, you will see. You have left what you call the civil society to do its forecasts. There is no problem because they are your clients, and thanks to them you will legitimate and justify the forms you defend. The forms you have been defending since who knows when. But what you call civil society is yourselves when you are not working in what you call the public duty. As if La Caixa (a public bank and foundation) were a private society! We are not that stupid, no matter how you try to fool us.

You have fooled us with a great subtlety and I congratulate you. It is difficult to find such a clean and neat work nowadays. You have left us alone and we thank you for it, because you were not presentable. You have cleaned your hands because you think that the own forms of a nation (the

art you talk about) are updated without any need to support them publicly. It is a hundred percent true for Catalonia. You have placed placebos everywhere you could in order to hide your own political misery. But you are wrong in one thing. There are illnesses that you cannot detect, because they are not illnesses, but simple vomiting that do not give an answer to any problem, only to simple states that are different from yours. Vomits that are not only immigrants from the rest of Spain but that also have the eight Catalan last names, and who also detest you as much as I do. States that coexist with you, but that you have evidently never noticed. They are forms without symbols, without icons to hold to. Forms that do not even exist in relation with your presence, but that oblige you, with subtlety also, to think in yourselves with fear when you look out of the window. Speeches and realities that you try to clean and wash vigorously, but that got accustomed, as well as cockroaches, to insecticide.

You call this habit consensus. You label it as culture and integration. And once more, you are completely right. Because you will always be completely right. The rightness that timeless forms from your world will grant you.