

The Magic of Creation

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The naturalist representation of the world involved its re-creation from the sensibilities and perceptions of primal man. This work was understood then as relating to a parallel other world more credible than the real world. Naturalist pictography was the first form of bringing the object of desire from the parallel world into the real world, a necessity for survival. In those times the artist was known as a mystic, and art was considered a necessary magic to control reality. Later, when the process of specialization occurred, the artist's role was removed from this natural model, and he began to work from his own concepts. The artist had to begin again to make a representation of the world and universe, and used the ideographic symbol as the perfect expression of these concepts. This abstract ideographic language was ideal for the expression of cosmological secrets, as well as theological and cultural knowledge. The Artist Magicians were those who knew the secrets of creation, revealing through their work all the possible worlds to humanity.

The Artist Magicians form a human conscience, revealing universes that are concentric or chaotic, silent or resounding; they are devotees whose occupation is to reveal or to make possible things that have never been, things that will be, or things that will continue to be. The primordial magic art has not changed; the change is only in our way of perceiving. That limitation in perception leads to tedium and confusion until the evidence is accepted. The magic is there still, with the same simplicity which Benedetto Croce indicated when he stated that the search for art is to look for a concept that everybody knows. The search for art is not necessary, it is self-evident. It is simply not understood that it is understood.

This project, *The Artist Magicians*, proposes to complete one of the many circles or closed loops to return the Artist as knowing Magician and ally of the mysteries of Creation. In the contemporary visual arts are two key primal theories on the origin of art which include the re-creation of the function and concepts of that art. I refer to the work of Alois Riegl on the naturalist origin and the pictographic expression of art; and to Gotfried Semper's thesis about the origin of the abstract and its ideographic expression.

The Artist Magicians

With their personal visions the artists Joel Jover Llenderrosos, Osmany Soler Mena and James K-M translate in a subconscious or instinctive way the survival of the original meanings of primal art.

Joel Jover Llenderrosos

Jover's work is a continuous experiment of search, encounter and reunion. Constantly seeking, and finding elements and forms, he redefines these within the context of his most persistent personal symbols, revealing shifting relationships of power and form. His personal symbols transform again through the filter of reutilization.

His vision of the mask that persists throughout his work is a dual and depersonalizing element that hides or reveals many faces. We choose to use such faces to introduce ourselves, and to grow: to cover, discover and reveal. That elemental mask form uses the Egyptian formal cause of representation: flat and frontal, and is related to the stylized shape of the idols on Easter Island. From that same mask face shoots a powerful blast of lightning,

a tongue of condemnation. Is this the tongue of the mask or is it the tongue of the face behind the mask?

Another persistence of primal form can be found in the spiral, or in the concentric circles that allude to the first marks on the walls of caves and the labyrinth's formal elaborations, revealing ideas about immensity and the infinite. But Jover adds to that form four red circles as cardinal points, perhaps to suggest a perfect square containing the infinite circle, or implying the four-member sign of the cross, a sign of Paleolithic origin commonly used to evoke human and anthropomorphic representation. Actually the spirals or concentric circles of Joel reflect a complexity of profound concepts, a message of travel, of leaving or returning from somewhere.

In some works we can find the appearance of human forms made according to the formal codes of the Neolithic period, although they could fit to the group codes of the Mesolithic as well, when hunters represented themselves as migratory groups chasing wild animals. Here is one of the more important concepts in Jover's work: an emphasis on the idea of migratory chaos, a dynamic and disoriented human mass lost in migration. Place is not as important as the idea of migrating. As the Cuban ethno-sociologist Fernando Ortiz said, "Every history begins with a migration, because men are always from another place."

All this migratory disorder, this great human dynamic, presents itself over the textured backgrounds in which Jover focuses his attention. He summons them as a support and expressive element of the imbued scenes, textures alluding to the walls of caves.

The work presented by Joel Jover to the project *The Artist Magicians* shows a redefinition of tribal symbolic representation, an analogy of our world and our reality.

Osmany Soler Mena

Osmany's work is a recreation of pictographic and naturalist figuration mixed in a pseudo-abstract language to represent bison, enormous fish, extinct animals, anthropomorphic figures and other images of ancient appearance.

In all cases, Osmany concentrates himself in the idea of the simulation; stone and humidity simulated through the use of real and imaginary textures; sometimes, the simulation of time's havoc and the fossil state of animals are represented through the skillful use of colour, shades and phantasmagorical materialization of the pseudo-abstract figure. In contemplation of his works we feel an allusion to the art of the caves, but we can perceive one vision that plays with the illusion of time and the appearance of forms.

Pseudo-abstract representation densifies figurative presentation; it offers an esoteric characteristic of other possible meanings interwoven in the same body. The form then appears transcended by its own distortion, by its own ghosts and spirits, and it becomes poly-semantic: one object with many simultaneous interpretations and associations.

Osmany Soler displays his discourse about simulation, metamorphosis and the involvement of several kinds of reality inside the same body or figure. In the same way, that reality persists in our new cave period.

James K-M

“every time man – in the more plural and historical sense – asks himself questions about what is presented or what is understood as the reality, either subjects, objects or both, he is implicitly saying at the same time that “he doesn’t know”, “there is much more to know”. But, what?, in all he knows, is he convinced he knows that, really?; I mean, it is “necessary”, at least, to know or “continue” knowing or, to know “as such”, but, to know what, to know how, or also, why to know?”

John G. Lazos Ross. Metaphysics, God and Modernity.

For James K-M the rich inner world and metaphysical matters represent a continuous praxis, free of clichés and concepts, free of rules and established conventions, which are published in books unable “to see the light” that they purport to refer to. In his metaphysical praxis, it is not the same to say that this praxis is a way of life, but rather it is developed from his life; from experiences, knowledge and inner questioning. James has gone beyond life’s limitations. Limits are at the same time new clues for other kinds of relationships with Being that emphasize plurality, or the plural access to the plural worlds of Being. James has transcended the objective barriers of reality because he knows these limitations. But far from ignoring or counteracting them in his abstract work, he feeds the reality in order to realize the true dimension of that reality. What is the point of finding the limits of the objective and subjective, when we know that both can be found in each other? Can we know how to find the objective within the subjective or the subjective inside the objective? How can reality be more subjective than subjectivity itself? How many, then, could be the categories of reality and how many forms to speak of that reality? James turns to a primary reality, to the reality of the essence, which at the same time becomes a common reality from which all things could begin. Indeed, that primary reality should be as simple as possible, in order to understand the complete scheme of underlying realities and subjectivities.

Once this concept of primary reality is understood, then it is possible to imagine why James has tended through his entire career, towards geometric abstraction, or how he has achieved simplification, and representation of only one form, an essential form able to replay and multiply itself over the same background, and can be located in other spatial axes, parallel and perpendicular. This multiple and plural existence of a same figure is the expression of diversity in Oneness.

Form and geometric composition are subordinated to a balanced and harmonious order; balance and harmony repeat themselves infinitely, from the simplest form to the most complex. The dual condition of balance and harmony in the abstract geometric expression multiplies and pluralizes itself, because the plural is simply the infinite multiplication of that duality, the part and the counterpart.

In visual languages of the Neolithic tribal period, form began to be simplified as a result of mental analysis of reality. Then, common to all human groups in that period, the abstract ideographic discourse appeared, regardless of cultural origin. With the ideographic sign they revealed their vision of the world, of objective and subjective reality, and their theories about the relationship of Being and the universe. The ideographic sign schematized existence and nonexistence. If we combine the visions, purposes, experiences and artistic expressions of James K-M with the signifiers of tribal ideographic expression and their meaning, then we can understand what occurred when a member of the native community of Canada contemplated some of James’ works. Astonished, he asked the artist how it could be possible for him to know their secrets. The answer is not only in the similarities of the visual language, the answer can be found in the depth of the content and symbols that

underlie the activated forms by James and the tribal groups from Canada. Simply, both, through different ways, asked themselves the same questions and they received, through different ways too, the same answers, but in different times, codified answers which are present in both abstract systems of expression.

How could an artistic discourse with such a direct reference to a magic-artistic practice as ancient as the abstract ideography of the Neolithic transcend the current world which is punished by the speed of the avant garde of Modernity, and which has Post-Modern strategy as a means of survival? Once again the answer is not in the form or the action, but in the attitude. James himself says that he is not interested in making “the new new”, but making “the old new”. In this matter I agree again with John G. Lazos Ross when he says: “Novelty is no guarantee that what you are saying is necessary.” Every time I am more sure that the answers we seek are already found in our past. To deny our past is to forbid ourselves to dream of the future. The work of James has an immediate sense, yet it doesn't need that sense in order to be what it is: abstract expression of that objectivity within subjective reality.

James uses colours without hues, alternating prominence between ground and figure. In his compositions can be seen the alternation among pairs of colours, representing some necessity or path to balance, to the need of a counterpart for the part. This necessity leads us to the dual condition of Being and to the plural projection of that multiplied duality.

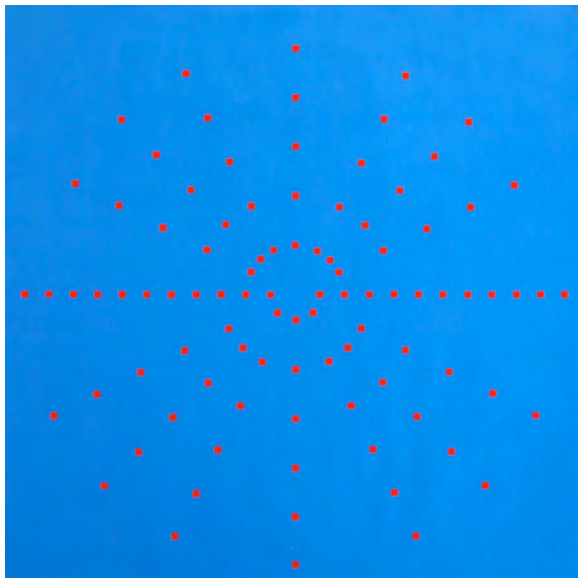
To the Pythagorean, numbers were the crucial principle of every proportion, order and harmony in the universe; to James the study of numbers is not unknown, and is expressed in his abstract work, many times subconsciously. Here he uses collections formed by 6 works, perhaps his intuition, not reason, is responsible for his choice, because 6 is the symbol of the divine triangle's area and the first perfect number. The same intuition would be responsible for the predilection of the square figure and the number 4. The square can be found in the so-called shamanic drums of 4 parts, as a sort of global modeling scheme of the world, also present in the known “square dances”, practiced by North American natives as part of an ancient ritual of fertility. The number 4 is a closed and perfect expression of balance and compensation between areas and powers. It represents the absolute, equality, rectitude, uniformity, order, reason, truth, justice, wisdom, honour and Earth.

The fact that the artist doesn't appear to know or is not interested in reading about the meanings of symbols and the pre-existing conventions of certain anthropological and mythological characteristics of the geometric and numerical expressions perceived in his works doesn't mean that his perceptions are not valid. Many of these perceptions show that James' abstract painting is directly linked to the ideographical and esoteric tribal arts, for magical and metaphysical symbols live within it.

Finally I wish to analyze the most recent work of James K-M, titled *Meanderthal*, created in Cuba specifically for this project. In the 12 new works the background treatment is irregular, the brushstroke is variable in intensity, seeming more emotive, changeable. Backgrounds become a new protagonist, transforming figures into details which continue in their ambivalent chromatic relation, tetravalent, in this case. Over the ground itself there is an interesting exchange in the leading role of the figure, now an expression of an endless density above which Oneness is particularized. It would result, then, in an inverse approach to what he has been doing until now. We could say that until now it was possible to perceive the plural projection from Oneness, now it is possible to perceive Oneness as a part of that plurality, surrounded by an extreme denseness. In these last works the triumph of emotion over the intellect can be perceived, also, the fact that the artist does not have entire control over the moment of conception and creation, or that control is different

now. The artist faces a whole universe of unknown feelings and the only way to try to control it, at this time, is to represent it mixed, diverse and emotional. Emotion shows confusion; we could say that emotion is a first step, the step of sensitivity, in order to arrive, later, at any way of knowledge. This is James' first approach to the magical realism which characterizes the Caribbean people, especially Cuban. And the way that James found to express his perception of that reality was perhaps defined by his early figurative works: a discreet use of the expressionism of colour, shade and brushstroke.

English version prepared by Carol Sill



Clockwise from top left:

Joel Jover Llenderrosos, Untitled, 25 cm x 25 cm, mixed media on canvas, 2008

James K-M, Meanderthal, 24" x 24", acrylic on paper, 2009

Osmany Soler Mena, The Cloud Series, acrylic on canvas, 2007

James K-M, Question and Answer and Stars, 24" x 24", acrylic on paper, 2009