
HECTOR DIAZ
Edgar Mendoza
24 Masterpieces

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Masterpieces

Introduction 4

Adam and Eve, 2021 8
Nobody, 2021 14
Visitor, 2020 20
Silence, 2018 24
Submarine, 2018 28
Death, 2017 32
Bulbs, 2016 38
Nest, 2015 42
Ophelia, 2015 46
Symphony No. 1, 2014 52
Mutant, 2013 58
Phenotype II, 2013 64
Phenotype I, 2013 70
Lumen, 2012 76
Extraction of the stone of madness, 2012 82
Ice, 2010 88
Alternating Current, 2010 96
Entomophagous, 2009 100
Two Pilares II, 2009 108
The picnic, 2008 114
The surgeons, 2008 122
Two Pilares, 2006 130
The flying chair, 2002 134
Dreaming of dogs, 2000 150

Edgar Mendoza

Introduction

Edgar Mendoza

B. October 11, 1967 - Durango, Mexico

“I do not intend to create stereotypes with my characters. The appearance, the actions and the scenery they are part of are actually just a pretext to frame the feelings and internal emotions of these people portrayed. They surround themselves with a certain atmosphere to give a certain narrative or symbolic meaning, but, above all, I am interested in observing them internally; I find it interesting that the models express introspection, but also existential vitality. My characters can seek their own self-analysis to obtain answers about themselves, for which they also resort to generating a double with whom they can converse, discuss and reflect”.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza, one of the most outstanding contemporary realists in Latin America, is an artist who transcends the mimetic representation of reality to create dreamlike worlds and visual poems that invite reflection. His work, which is characterized by a style he calls "Actual Realism", is a constant dialogue between reality and his inner world, a universe of emotions and sensations that he shares with the viewer.

Since childhood he has defined himself as a "code reader," a sensitive observer who interpreted the world through his own creative filter. His childhood, marked by games and reflections, nourished his capacity for wonder and his desire to understand the reality that surrounded him. During his youth, he explored various vocations, but finally found his true passion in art, an "accident" that transformed his life forever.

His encounter with painting was fortuitous, but from that moment on his life changed radically. He felt called to create images that reflected his vision of the world and his own life experience. His style, characterized by detailed and evocative realism, allows him to explore both objectivity and subjectivity, the concrete and the abstract, always through realistic figuration.

Throughout his career he has developed his own pictorial language that allows him to communicate his concerns and narratives in an authentic and personal way. His work, which has been recognized

and admired by collectors, artists, art dealers, curators, critics and journalists, is an invitation to look inside ourselves and reflect on our own existence.

He defines himself as an artist committed to his time and his own truth. For him, being an artist in the 21st century means being authentic and faithful to his own voice, creating regardless of trends or fashions. His humility and his connection with the essentials of life are reflected in his vision of art and in his desire to connect with the public through his creations.

He recognizes that his legacy will depend on how his work is rediscovered and valued in the future. His wish is that his paintings transcend time and continue to generate emotions and reflections in new generations.

As a gallerist, I am proud to present an artist of the stature of Edgar Mendoza, a creator who invites us to look within ourselves and appreciate the beauty and complexity of the world around us. I invite you to discover his work, a testimony of his talent, his passion and his commitment to art.

–**Héctor Díaz**

The following documents:

- Statement
- Biography
- Exhibition history
- Bibliography
- Essays by the artist
- Essays on the artist
- Interviews
- Media

They are available in downloadable PDF format at this link: **Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Adam and Eve



***Adam and Eve**,* 2021, Oil on Linen, 130 x 195 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Adam and Eve

2021, Oil on Linen, 130 x 195 cm

I started this painting in 2018 and completed it three years later in 2021.

An unfinished project whose characteristics and symbolism were largely suggested by the collector.

For me, the most interesting aspect of the work was the lesson left by its exhaustive realization, to which I dedicated all my resources and pictorial tools up to that moment.

This work has been a lesson about the general values that help an artist stay on their feet in the face of adversity.

The challenge was to satisfy the collector's full vision, setting aside my own free interpretation, a situation that greatly drained me, questioning my own foundations and making me doubt my own abilities.

A whole battle against the artist's ego and a profound reflection on the limits that should exist between the person commissioning a painting and the painter themself.

Being able to satisfy that need of another, obtaining their full acknowledgment, is one of the best rewards for our work, but a complex individuality of each party often comes into play in this transaction.

The painting underwent countless changes and modifications, which at first I decided to take on as the best of challenges, but after so many corrections, my will began to wane, creating chaos in my own sense of security.

I stopped believing in myself and my ego played a very bad trick on me... As painters, we experience multiple lessons throughout our career that will turn us into the best professional version we aspire to, but in this process, we learn much more from the major blows and obstacles we manage to overcome.

The painting hung in my studio for a prolonged time as if it were a warning, but also in this noble craft, time usually heals mistakes, and one day "Adam and Eve" made peace with my past frustrations...

The values of Adam and the teaching of Eve

It could be said that paintings are like living entities, they are not just objects; a painting accumulates the entire record of diverse circumstances that the author lives while creating it. And even more so when it comes to pictorial realism, due to the long duration and coexistence needed for its execution.

How could AI replace that human record called painting?... We won't know until it happens, but in the meantime, it will find it very difficult to first experience its own existential consciousness in order to pretend to equal it.

Within all the technical processes developed in my paintings, I value the compositional structure of this work, as well as every modification that was corrected as progress was made. Behind that rigid aspect transmitted by each of the elements that make up this design, there are technical approaches that struggled to give the final result the best aesthetic harmony. The presence of so many elements competing for their place in the visual arrangement was resolved through a harmony of shapes, colors, and spaces that allowed the viewer a sensation that everything is neatly in its place. However, the whole might have worked better had it not been for that finish and pictorial effect—not so realistic—which, in my opinion, turns this painting artificial and illustrative.

All the calculations that I set out and reflected upon became part of my own dictionary for the construction of subsequent paintings, and a combination of technique, trial, error, and my emotional and lived circumstances of those years, have resulted in a painting that I am proud to show today. Its meaning is perhaps what I am least interested in explaining, however, each of the elements that compose this story generates a symbol that I will allow myself to revisit in future versions.

The narrative uses the figures of Adam and Eve merely as a reference to discuss a story about the interpersonal relationships of a couple, about their differences, judgments, and roles played.

Among the symbols we find: Doors as a threshold, an open cage as freedom, a throne as dominance, a monkey as a pet, a dog as fidelity, a board with a contract and an hourglass as relentless time, a broken mirror as a vanitas, a bitten apple...

In the painting, there is an absence of emotions, as if it were a store window display…

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Nobody



Nobody, 2021, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 100 cm © Edgar Mendoza





Nobody

2021, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 100 cm

The events that concern me as a creator directly influence my vision and the motifs I wish to depict.

This painting was created between the winter of 2020 and the spring of 2021, in the midst of the process of ending the lockdown forced upon us by the terrible COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout these months, my priority has focused on a profound reflection on the susceptibility of the human species and the race to become aware as a society of preparing for future major shocks, which we are certain will come.

Certainty, uncertainty, and essence. The clearer we are about our essence, the greater the balance between our identity and who we want to be. Move by who you truly are and not by what you should be.

Being at peace with who you are, so as not to fear uncertainty, and deciding to survive without reproach for as long as it takes, is not resignation, but another version of happiness.

Nobody was conceived after a personal process that has transcended a substantial change in my life and that marked a before and after in my essence that I continue to seek day by day: just for today. For every great change, a transformation is required that exposes us to the point of extinction.

Hitting rock bottom to be aware, and if we manage to survive, to be able to start the path to transcend.

So far, *Nobody* is the painting that reflects my greatest technical advances in tune with a clear and honest personal conceptual vision that I want to convey.
Its message essentially speaks of my personal circumstances translated through a metaphorical scene of this half-naked woman whose serenity wants to convey to us the process she has lived to achieve the self-confidence that allows her to face what could be to come.
The metaphor includes a series of symbols: The origins of *Nobody* go back to four previous paintings linked together whose kinship shows ideas expressed by women wrapped in bubble wrap. Ice and other materials are included as similar substitutes for female models. The creation of these alternatives also served to convey the necessary transparencies that induce the viewer to look inward.

This series sought to create an entire universe in which human figures and objects coexist, creating a new vision that included, for example, the genre of still lifes, but also intended to show landscapes and narratives that are yet to be developed.

Eleven years of maturation passed between my work *Alternating Curren*t, *Ice*, and the two still life examples, which showed screws, washers, and wires encapsulated in ice.

The result was this new painting titled *Nobody*, in which I once again pay tribute for the third time to another saga that since I was a teenager marked my creativity through hundreds of drawings that I made, as well as cardboard models, which finally ended up in the trash can back in the 80s: *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott in 1982, and *Blade Runner 2049* by Denis Villeneuve in 2017. Cult films that I have found in their content perfect suggestions towards my own personal universe concerns.

Part of my process of maturation and honesty over these years has consisted of losing my fear of taking on other people's ideas without complexes or prejudices, processing them in an attempt to create independent images, always with deep respect and the appropriate declaration of the corresponding copyright.

The element itself that I respectfully borrow and incorporate into my painting as is, is the Baseline Test, derived from Voight Kampff's machine, from the science fiction novella *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick from 1968.

In my painting the machine has examined the woman and is also examining the viewer, there are textures and translucent elements that accompany the internal silence of the character and those ice structures that synthesize all the essence of the diversity of lives that we could find in the most unusual structures.

I try to generate a series of reflections on our identity and on how external controls and examinations influence us. A reflection on how this analysis affects us and how it makes us who we are.

Nobody belongs to a series whose project called *Transparencies* aims to develop an ecosystem of paintings on essence, identity, and on the new concepts that can be reborn from this research.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Visitor



Visitor, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 89 x 130 cm © Edgar Mendoza





Visitor

2020, Oil on Canvas, 89 x 130 cm

An empty house, a forgotten home, a nakedness that expresses freedom and security, or on the contrary: exposed and vulnerable lack of protection.

A scenario can generate the emotion of feeling alone or accompanied, it makes us reconstruct with memories, the parts that do not exist or that we have lost.

With abandonment, a stage ends but also the possibility of a new beginning is generated. The skin is shed like a peeling wall that whispers its secrets.

The temperature of each season of the year is felt because it filters through those doors and windows that once existed.

Nakedness can be objective when we see it as it is, and subjective even if we see it dressed.

Who is the visitor? The one inside or the one outside?
They observe you from their own perspective.

One under a roof that one day lit up at night, taking the pulse of life that she carries on her arm.
The other, feeling the breath of the house that darkens with the sunset.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Silence



***Silence**,* 2018, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 20 cm © Edgar Mendoza

Silence

2018, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 20 cm

The third painting stemming from the photographic series created in 2012 for the project "Phenotype."

Initially, "Water" was the theme that the Santiago Echeberría Gallery proposed to its artists as the concept to title that year's winter exhibition.

To date, this series of photographs has inspired three versions; "Silence" is the smallest version that attempts to maintain its level of detail compared to the other two, which surpass it in size.

For a spectator to remain engaged when observing a small painting, it is very important to adequately choose the fragment of detail that allows the motives to be expressed through technique and concept.

Personally, I consider that the technique of hyperrealism executed in minuscule sizes loses its capacity to shine through its details, and even more so when it has a complex concept that seeks to explain the reason behind the image.

When versions are repeated, the character is revisited multiple times so they may continue attempting to communicate an idea seen from different angles...

It is as if the model takes on multiple identities that allow her to retreat and advance in her own reasoning...

Identifying an artist who repeats versions to deepen their thoughts indicates that they need to develop the creation of an ecosystem that will possibly become the creation of a series.

In the paintings: Phenotype I (2013), Phenotype II (2013), and Silence (2018), the complex structure, meaning, and purpose that "water" holds as the protagonist, need to be incorporated into that internal reflection conveyed by these painted women who dialogue through their gazes.

Silence (2018) is a work that is briefly described, attempting to be commensurate with its size and the title that names the meaning of its absence...

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Submarine



***Submarine**,* 2018, Oil on Canvas, 71 x 61 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Submarine

2018, Oil on Canvas, 71 x 61 cm

"Discover the monsters that inhabit your depths, and talk with them..."

The phrase is about the exploration and confrontation of our deep mysteries, perhaps to answer our concerns that might lead us to resolve the end of a path. But to reach that depth in a search toward our inner world, every path first has a beginning...

"Submarine" is a painting that represents that first step toward the threshold of an entrance; in its allegory and visual narrative, it only wants to pause at the symbolic representation of that beginning without going further into the depths.

Its main symbols are shown through a nude, drowsiness, and a separate creature...

This subtle beginning is starring a woman who is about to fall asleep and is on that boundary between the first phase of light sleep and slumber. At this moment, reality is altered, and anything can happen... The interesting thing about this phase of lethargy is the partial loss of control from not knowing whether we are asleep, awake, or in a state whose rules of logic are confused in a mixture of reality or unreality, which gives rise to that necessary subjectivity in my narratives. We enter that unique and indefinite zone where objective realities and subjective realities can mix at the same time, even if they are incoherent and without being able to control their logic, which imposes itself upon us.

My work, in general terms, precisely has as one of its main pillars the representation of painted images that look real to convince us of their own unreality.

The nudes I paint can show vulnerable characters who seek refuge in the settings and clothing to resolve their purpose or expose their problem... but they can also express secure and balanced attitudes that do not need to cover the intention of their goals with unnecessary garments.

The woman has entered a semi-conscious state in search of her monsters; she does so completely nude, secure, and determined. In her primary logic, she and we all know that we don't go into the water dressed... she must enter without clothes because to begin searching for what is needed, she must be fully convinced to take that step to freely feel the water soaking the senses of her skin.
She submerges herself in those depths as if it were a sea, between reality and unpredictable imagination. Before... Perhaps she was reading Jules Verne or watching a movie about submarines; maybe she needed to find answers to the problems and concerns about her existence that have been affecting her lately.

We are our own monsters that disturb our reality; going out to search for them within ourselves is an act of maturity that sometimes takes a lifetime to get just one answer.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Death



Death, 2017, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 114 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Death

2017, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 114 cm

Mexicans abroad are culturally linked to death; even among ourselves, we boast of this deep root, not only in the collective unconscious of our people but also in a real and full awareness of the extreme violence experienced in our country with exorbitant figures of the dead and disappeared. And yet, we continue to celebrate the vision of this deeply rooted tradition in such a particular way because the inheritance of its legacy contains origins and precepts so ancient that they are capable of neutralizing that dramatic and dark part.

In Mexico, the tradition of death is seen and experienced differently according to the region you are in; its folklore represents one of the most important vital structures of the syncretism between the indigenous past and the arrival of the Spanish, which remains alive through our miscegenation. While in the communities of central and southern Mexico the amalgam of these two cultures has remained balanced, even with a greater tendency towards indigenous customs and their historical ancestral wealth, in the North, on the contrary, we practically renounced that local indigenous heritage because our more primitive and elemental tribes did not have as much sociocultural weight in the construction of our societies. In the northern Mexican states where I come from, the folklore and traditions are simple and with uprooted pre-Hispanic identities, which makes it difficult to keep native customs latent. Our Indian vestiges have barely communicated their increasingly extinct legacy through a language that feels more ancient and rudimentary from the precariousness of the desert and the rugged mountains. In the North, the tribes of our ancestors practically suffered extinction, and their absence was replaced without resistance by the new dominant New Spanish beliefs of Creoles and Mestizos and their Renaissance and Scholastic customs and thoughts.

Through this description, I intend to somehow explain how our origins and their anthropological circumstances influence our contemporary vision of what we want to transmit...

My parents followed the tradition of taking flowers to their deceased; they attended the cemetery on the Day of the Dead each year without any ostentation that resembled those replicated in other regions of Mexico that overflowed with folklore. In the neighborhoods of Durango, when people died, they were watched over in their homes with open doors so that neighbors could participate with prayers and condolences, and also so that children could see the face of the dead as part of life. As a child, the corners of the house were refuges for imagining, especially a small abandoned room that my parents allowed me to clean and tidy up to turn it into a storage room where I placed shelves with jars that classified a collection of insects and plants—my memories... I collected that inert world in abandoned houses and vacant lots... after school or during summer vacations, it was common to

find dead dogs and cats with their seven lives exhausted. On the rooftops and climbing high tree branches, I liked to watch the horizon full of hills and the church steeples while insects buzzed around me and I listened to the birds sing. All of Durango was full of birds; I suppose, like everywhere, the birds flew and kept the sky from seeming static... There were so many birds that children killed them playing with their slingshots; I once tried and intentionally missed the shot... I could never do it...

In her hands, she, who is nude, is Death; she carries an inert bird that will no longer sing... Vanitas.

Over the years, I feel more honest if I practice what I believe in, attempting to construct concepts with which my nature and instincts truly feel identified; I no longer strive so hard to pretend to understand knowledge for which I was not born. I try to maintain coherence between the beliefs of my personal life and the congruence of painting a reality, not only with a contemporary realistic style but also with a genuine narrative of my thought, so as not to provoke a sensation of artificiality or pretentious falsity. My own idea of death is ethereal, being more of an existential reflection that is supported by my belief in God but also in loss and the realistic and objective fact of no longer having life. But to represent this concept and personify it, in the Spanish-speaking world, our language overwhelmingly grants it a feminine form; therefore, in our New Spanish world that has been the foundation of Mexicans, we pronounce death as a woman…

Death (2017) is a painting that attempts to convey a sensation similar to what we experience when we see a sequence shot in a film, but in this case, without movement. Its panoramic vision is arranged so that the spectator experiences the sensation of being part of the environment in the scene themself... observing how the twilight illumination descends and presents the main character in the foreground, whose purpose is to show the concept that titles the work reflected in a dead bird. To transmit the synthesis of the thought I have accumulated in my life about death and its influences in a painting, I have created a composition with two main horizontal bands; the luminous and colorful upper one with the trees represents my ancient indigenous heritage... and the lower one is sober and refers to the legacy of the old Eurasian world.

Between these two planes, chiaroscuros are distributed and intermingled, alluding to New Spanish miscegenation; the protagonist figure is arranged vertically between the two bands, reinforcing the idea that its meaning is the product of both in a syncretism.

The work's narrative is intimate and humanist, proposing the sensory contemplation of a scene that wants to convey the true simplicity of the concept of death.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Bulbs



***Bulbs**,* 2016, Oil on Canvas, 114 x 81 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Bulbs

2016, Oil on Canvas, 114 x 81 cm

I wanted to show a lot and make it seem like one sees very little.

Without an open horizon and with a wall behind one.
To synthesize so much information from elements, the transparencies of glass and vaporous fabrics were propitious.

If we have a wall, the metaphor of glass can pass through it like an imaginary stained glass window.

I chose light and its whiteness so that it could be the narrator of that character who proposes the following reflection:

"The renewal of creation; the beginning of things is within ourselves."

A nest that has been built so that things can happen if the wind is favorable.

As a child I watched through the rear slits of that first black and white television that my parents bought with great effort. It was a whole world of electronic vacuum tubes that people of my time called "bulbs." I imagined a whole micro system between those little lights, as if they were strange incubators rooting future lives.

How long will the fairies accompany us along the way?

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Nest



Nest, 2015, Oil on Canvas, 82 x 105 cm © Edgar Mendoza





Nest

2015, Oil on Canvas, 82 x 105 cm

About dystopian worlds and the visual language that we begin to evoke through films even when we are ignorant or illiterate.

It was inevitable that George Miller would not inspire my limited imagination as a lover of his Mad Max saga, and a romantic of those post-apocalyptic worlds that put man in total survival forced by a destroyed era.

The distance narrates a wide desolate landscape in its own nature.

We do not know the time, it could be dusk or a new dawn, perhaps it is midday, clouded by the swirling dust that foretells a rain of dirt in that wasteland.

The survivor is no longer just the man, but is also a woman, twin, double or cloned showing the two sides of herself.
We read stereotypes as we were taught to look at black and white.

Can we extract from such a magnificent cinematographic work, a piece that breathes on its own?

This is one of my attempts to pay homage and at the same time humbly try to create a new idea by being myself in my need to convey the concept of looking inside ourselves using a certain scenario to generate emotions and feelings through a simple painting.

A nest that symbolizes losing and not having hope so that it allows us to activate the self of survival.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Ophelia



***Ophelia**,* 2015, Oil on Canvas, 56 x 90 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Ophelia

2015, Oil on Canvas, 56 x 90 cm

Ophelia is in some ways such a stereotypical symbol that attempting to present yet another version out of thousands can be dangerous and pretentious... besides being a female character who transcends through her death and as a corpse.

In 2004, I saw Millais' painting "Ophelia" for the first time in London. It is one of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings I like the most, and seeing it live motivated my desire to work on my own version, which I began planning in 2013. But reinterpreting such a widely used and versioned icon by various media, like the character of Ophelia from the work Hamlet, raised doubts for me because in those years I resisted using such a recognizable character so directly without practically modifying their aesthetic discourse.

For me, the idea of my own narratives was the creation of figures authentically authored by me... As the years passed, I modified my criterion, mainly because I concluded that it was limiting or absurd to deprive myself of the possibility of reinterpreting everything that has captured my attention and added to my identity throughout my life.

As a reflection, I consider that our creativity daily receives an innumerable diversification of artistic proposals from other creators as inspiration. All this information offered to us by the various media—be it literature, cinema, history, sciences, art, and creativity in general in its multiplicity of possibilities—definitively influences our vision, however original we try to appear. Freeing oneself from prejudices that can limit one's own creation is an important step in an artist's maturation process, which is why today I have no problem painting my versions of historical ideas or icons.

"Nihil novum sub sole (There is nothing new under the sun)..."

Even so, I needed my reinterpretation of Ophelia to focus on another narrative direction that did not involve a Romanized aesthetic language; instead, I wanted to frame my story around an extremely delicate topic in Mexico during those years: the tragedy of missing women in Ciudad Juárez. I had no opportunistic intention of creating a social or political outcry; I only wanted to represent a fact itself about one of the many faces and identities of the concept of death... about its emptiness.

"When you kill a man, you take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have." (Unforgiven, 1992, Clint Eastwood)

From the beginning, I was very clear that my Ophelia—to name her somehow and relate her to the icon—should actually and specifically be the discovery of a dead woman found on the banks of a stream or drain. The body, which has not yet been removed from the scene, should present the disturbed appearance of a recent, disheveled corpse undergoing the corresponding investigations by the police and forensic experts; therefore, the scene should also show some kind of sign of that chain of custody at some edge of the painting.

In a realistic painting, every existing element is fundamental to its reading and interpretation; composing a scene with a coherent narrative is a complex task of composition.

The flowers and their powerful allegorical capacity also had to be included, not only because of Shakespeare's original mention in the story and the highly varied presence of these in the Millais painting that inspired me, but because flowers were necessary as a symbol of the fragility of life as vanitas among so many other interpretations that, according to contemporary critics, turn this element into just a discredited, archaic, or kitschy ornament... delusionally. The perfect and protagonist plant for my painting would be the oleander, a Mediterranean shrub whose flowers and leaves are toxic and poisonous.

In 2013, I conducted the photo session with Julia, the model who posed for this character... I dug a ditch in my garden, improvising a small pit with plastic, which I filled with water, oleander branches, and soil. We spent an entire morning trying to reproduce the character's role in every shot I needed, and I finally achieved it, not without a slight cold from the model's superb collaboration to represent a corpse—which fortunately was just an anecdote of no great importance compared to the dramatic end that befell the model for the master Millais...

A project that is still waiting to be realized...

I have painted two preparatory exercises in small formats as sketches, but they do not reflect the characteristics described above that I intend for this project, which is still unmade.

In 2017, the architect José Manuel Infiesta asked me for a new painting for the MEAM, and I told him about this project, which he accepted for the museum... Unfortunately, with the architect's death, the commission was canceled and remains pending a new collector who values the idea exactly as it is.

We are talking about a large, horizontal painting that shows that lying body, whose characteristics and theme are not necessarily commercial or pleasant...

This first exercise, which I titled Ophelia (2015), in no way contains that complex burden on the subject that I need to express; on the contrary, this painting, done on a 56 x 90 centimeter panel...

...rather reflects the serenity of the character in contact with the water of the pond and the rhythms of the poisonous oleanders that are her bed…

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Symphony No. 1



Symphony No. 1*,* 2014, Oil on Canvas, 162 x 220 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Symphony No. 1

2014, Oil on Canvas, 162 x 220 cm

Inspiration

Symphony I could be part of that controversial polemic about the limits that we should not exceed when we decide to take back someone else's intellectual property.

We all have references that inspire us with their wonderful creativity and vision. History is full of examples and influences between some creators and others that have ultimately resulted in a richer and more extensive creative universe in its multiple versions.

Perhaps the limits are only exceeded when we try to say that we are the original author of an idea that is not really ours.

In 1996 I read one of my favorite novels for the first time, *Perfume* by Patrick Süskind, with it I imagined scenarios that years later I was able to see materialized when I saw the film adaptation of the novel directed by Tom Tykwer in 2006, *Perfume, the Story of a Murderer*.
It was above all the climax scene: the orgy with mass nudity; accompanied by that sublime soundtrack by Johnny Klimek & Reinhold Heil. This scene inspired me to paint *Symphony I*.

With this painting I wanted to pay homage to *Perfume*, trying not to fall into the dangerous terrain of plagiarism.

I already had the setting so that my personal reflections and concepts could be conveyed. When we use an idea or an icon that is already known, we make the viewer subliminally reconstruct a part of the narrative that we are proposing as an environment.
Once the viewer has recognized the symbols in the environment, the next step will be to show characters characterized to transmit messages. This is where the coherent reading that the viewer has been reading visually ends, to then provoke a new reading with other apparently incoherent codes that are not based only on objective images, but that begin to communicate through a sensory and subjective proposal.

Characters

The woman on the left is wearing a semi-transparent fabric, like a camouflage that sticks to her wet body; with her gaze she speaks to us silently.

The woman on the right is tied to a scaffold, she does not observe us, it is as if she were alien or hermetic.

These characters act out a role for which they have been disguised, one could easily free herself from her bonds, the other invites us to recognize her possible story.

In the next section, loving couples interact, as if wanting to impregnate the atmosphere with the meaning of a kiss or a hug.
Then, a clear and empty background unifies through light every detail of the global scene, allowing those independent stories to exist on a single plane.

If these anachronistic protagonists do not have a logical narrative and there is a disconnection between them, there is a great possibility of generating in the spectator the sensation of observing a meaningless scene.

We would therefore be saying that this painting intends to communicate through an abstract language despite its realistic technical elaboration.

The experiment proposed by *Symphony I* is: to stop asking ourselves whether meaning exists and move on to the fleeting realm of the perception of sensations.

Four possibilities or movements that are expressed independently, but that are linked together by the background that unites them.

Does *Symphony I* succeed in making its different sounds share common properties and become a whole?

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Mutant



Mutant, 2013, Oil on Canvas, 162 x 114 cm © Edgar Mendoza




ヨーロッパ近代美術館



Mutant

2013, Oil on Canvas, 162 x 114 cm

Mutant is a painting that can easily be confused with a gore theme, but this is just an excuse to provoke a first impression. It is surrounded by an atmosphere to give a certain symbolic meaning.

It is framed as a highly empowered character, a term closely related to feminism and its ongoing sociocultural reflection.

The character does not seek approval of what she considers her consistency, she carries as a banner the concept and the warning of being protected, the weapon itself seems to be herself, a chainsaw that provides her intentions in her purposes or in her actions.

A model was needed that showed physical strength and firmness of face, that concealed her nakedness with transparencies without complexes or erotic pretensions.

This woman in that first information is presented powerful with her artifact, half-naked to tell us that perhaps she is not what she seems.

Later she takes you to her gaze, which in reality when you observe it, does not threaten you. She wants you to go inside her like the other women in my paintings.

Silence can provide answers to the concerns of a character who wants to cut off what she no longer needs from herself, and which prevents her from moving on to the next stage of growth.

More than an empowerment that wants to fight for something, it's actually having the conviction that to continue evolving, you must leave something behind and sacrifice it.

Are the conceptual nature and psychological and feminine personality of *Mutant* enough to compete with the powerful symbol of that powerful chainsaw?

The painting belongs to the collection of the European Museum of Modern Art (MEAM).

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Phenotype II



Phenotype II, 2013, Oil on Wood, 86 x 140 cm © Edgar Mendoza






ModPortrait 2013
Primer Premio

Phenotype II

2013, Oil on Wood, 86 x 140 cm

The painting is technically executed in an extremely detailed style. It involved long and arduous days of work in which patience and concentration prevailed. As a painter I had to use a very complex technique.

The clean gaze is a weapon of seduction and one of the characteristics of *Phenotype II*.

It is a psychological portrait of a character that, using a hyper-realistic pictorial technique, shows in a very detailed way a kind of physical map of the model.

She shows herself directly and objectively to the viewer through her face, but in her greatest need, she needs to be heard, inviting us in her silence to penetrate her inner existence, and read the circumstances and events that have made her who she is.

The purpose of *Phenotype II*, speaks about how our physical features are influenced or modified by our environment and the circumstances that surround us. The character portrayed is playing a role for this purpose, but it has nothing to do with the model, a friend named Carmen who posed to characterize this idea.

The clean atmosphere contrasts with all the extreme hyperrealistic detail on her face, but the character doesn't ask for her exterior to be seen; she wants to converse through her existential vitality, allowing us to observe her introspection, her feelings, and her emotions.

Phenotype I has been my most hyperrealistic painting to date and was the first-place winner in the first edition of the MODPORTRAIT 2013 International Portrait Competition, organized by the ArteLibre Gallery and the European Museum of Modern Art of Barcelona (MEAM). The work belongs to the museum's collection.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Phenotype I



Phenotype I, 2013, Oil on Wood, 86 x 140 cm © Edgar Mendoza





Phenotype I

2013, Oil on Wood, 86 x 140 cm

This painting is the first version of the series titled Phenotype, which also includes the work Silence (2018), whose protagonist is the same model who shares the stage with several glass jars containing roots under water... an idea inspired by the painting Lumen (2012).

Attempting to encompass the vast territory that water signifies when one thinks of it through a design... generally first takes us to the colossal quantities of seas and rushing torrents of rivers and waterfalls. But in this first version, Phenotype (2013), the concentrated representation of this liquid is expressed in small portions as if they were analysis samples stored for a study. In that laboratory, the contents of each sample are classified to allow for the diagnosis, through results, of the experiment's conclusions, either to declare it finished or to continue the search for that antidote.

To recreate in this painting a conceptual synthesis and the allegorical representation of a laboratory where an experiment on this protagonist woman is being conducted, I needed to transform, substitute, and synthesize the meaning of typical instruments with simple, everyday glass jars. My designs often find a better characterization of their symbolic objects in other elements or figures that can only ordinarily resemble the original containers...

"They look alike, but they are not..." as in the case of test tubes, flasks, beakers, etc., replaced by common, ordinary household preserving jars. In this way, we grant objects or actions an inherent capacity to be reinterpreted or decontextualized conceptually.

(Precisely, and as a separate note, this is the argument of two of my upcoming "series" titled... "Illusories" and "Invisible Camouflage")

Any object, material, or structure could modify the meaning of its purpose or nature depending on the context and the various norms where it is viewed...

In Phenotype (2013), these capsules... let's call them that... which contain water and something else, try to offer us a narrative that does not refer to chemical or biological results and analyses... Rather, it refers to the existential investigation into the emotions and capacities of the character's consciousness.

This laboratory is a memory that stores 'memories'...

All these stored thoughts form part of an existential archive of each individual portrayed; in those jars, aqueous solutions rest that engender small ecosystems of memories, starting as a seed that branches into roots to propel the construction of a tree with the capacity to recall events and experiences.

The "containers that hold memories" began to manifest in my work through glass cups and jars containing water or inverted containers indicating an absence of the aqueous element since 2006; their symbolism was always linked to the concept of recollections and memory.

(The Time Machine (2006), Maurición (2007), The Snack (2008), Lumen (2012), Phenotype (2013), Bulbs (2016), and Silence (2018)...)

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Lumen



***Lumen**,* 2012, Oil on Canvas, 89 x 75 cm © Edgar Mendoza







Lumen

2012, Oil on Canvas, 89 x 75 cm

Our culture has created subliminal stereotypes of both men and women that are often unfavorable as symbols.

When I paint a portrait of someone, the first step is to reproduce their physical resemblance, but if I want to create a narrative beyond that, and turn that person portrayed into an independent character regardless of who he or she is, I must create a context and an identity for them. These environments can simulate an artificial reality or a true illusion.

Lumen is the portrait of a woman who shows a medieval stereotype in her clothing, but who contrasts it with a personality of not being an objectified creature, but rather an intelligent, curious human being open to the knowledge of the existence that surrounds her and that is within herself.

She is an architect who asks questions, investigates answers and dares to invent possibilities.

Lumen is the light that a firefly emits not only in the darkness but also in the adversity of the day.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Extraction of the stone of madness



***Extraction of the stone of madness**,* 2012, Oil on Canvas, 150 x 150 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Extraction of the stone of madness

2012, Oil on Canvas, 150 x 150 cm

This painting is part of an important Mexican art collection, whose owner asked me to make a new version of the painting titled, The Snack (2008)... which belongs to the private collection of the (European Museum of Modern Art), MEAM, in Barcelona. In my opinion, the decision that artists must make to paint a new version of a previous painting simply has to do with the expressive capacity of the original idea to transcend, along with its characters, stories, and interpretive purposes.

The Snack (2008), with its concepts and arguments, not only suggested a further reinterpretation to materialize with the painting that this description refers to, Extraction of the Stone of Madness (2012)... but also makes me consider the creation of an entire series in which the global idea about the universe surrounding these two very particular and mysterious characters within the concept of multiple personalities... proposed in several of my paintings, can be developed.

Another necessary context...

The new theme that inspired this work, Extraction of the Stone of Madness (2012), was that medieval belief which held that madness was lodged in the brain in the form of a stone and could be cured by its removal. But this subject, although it seemed very interesting to me, would not have captured my attention so much without the experience of having seen Hieronymus Bosch's marvelous painting titled precisely (The Extraction of the Stone of Madness, 1480) for the first time in the Prado Museum in 1997... a title and theme that I copied as a humble and respectful tribute to one of the universal painters I have most admired. But this painting by Bosch also represents a perfect guide on how to suggest, through symbols, interpretations that actually mean the opposite or have readings with critical messages hidden in plain sight... Bosch criticized the ignorance of a society manipulated by imposed beliefs, such as those of the clergy and the quackery of the time... I in no way intend to compare my work with the colossal figure of such an illustrious painter. On the contrary, my recognition is directed towards the formulas that these distinguished artists bequeathed to us to be used in the interpretations we want to give to our current work, whose interests are similar in how to suggest our concepts.

While in my painting The Snack (2008), I propose a search and self-analysis of two characters who want to obtain answers about themselves by resorting to their double as a mirror to identify a truth about the whys of their personalities, in the design and subsequent version of Extraction of the Stone of Madness (2012), that internal self-analysis in constant transformation is also proposed as a concept.

The title of the work is exactly what we see directly in the scene...

Three characters who carry surgical instruments with which they have practiced the extraction of that stone... but... have they already removed that stone? Or rather... are they about to do it... precisely this is the difference in the new version. This variation intends an interactive experiment that consists of knowing if the three women influence the viewer enough through their attitudes and physiognomy to know if they can extract the stone of madness... They need our authorization. Resuming and generating new versions of our own work allows us to activate the necessary creative risks to get out of our comfort zone in the search for new advantageous findings.

While in the painting The Snack (2008), there were only two characters... here we are presenting three repeated figures whose purpose is to investigate the pictorial possibilities they have to be able to manipulate the viewer and convince them to be part of that community.

It has been proven that we subconsciously accede more easily to an invitation made by three people or more, than to one from just a pair of two... The more elements a collective has... the more confidence in participation or inclusion is generated, and the hive mind is activated...

The three women present themselves to the viewer as a mirror for self-analysis... they observe you directly, waiting for you to confirm the extraction of your own stone...

The landscape registers the levels of abundance and firmness of the land with its horizons as far as the eye can see and those skies that warn of the unpredictable with their clouds...

The diagrams with anatomies behind them are waiting to dry in the sun and air that surrounds them... one of those sheets is upside down...

In this painting, we find ourselves in a new territory, "That of Allied Personalities..."

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Ice



***Ice**,* 2010, Oil on Canvas, 114 x 41 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Ice

2010, Oil on Canvas, 114 x 41 cm

To achieve an effect of verisimilitude in a realistic painting, a long and patient process of observation, technique, and maturation of the natural talents that each artist possesses is required.

Among the materials that offer a true challenge to paint and successfully convey their truthfulness, fabrics and all accessories related to them are among the first. For centuries, artists have tried to reproduce them because, simply put... fabrics have dressed the character of scenes throughout practically the entire history of figurative art. This important material represents a record of every part of time... an anachronistic detector test that has the capacity to conceptually convert...

The past into the present, the present into the future, and transform the future into a perfect machine that designates an era in any temporal space...

Fabrics have transformed their appearance with the passage of fashion, technology, and will continue to be present as one of the inventions of the human being that has most granted identity, aesthetics, and protection. I began to discover in fabrics and clothing the enormous capacity these materials had to transmit and reinforce the symbology that my characters needed to communicate.

At the end of the 20th century, my work began to manifest a tendency inspired by magical realism that, during the first decade of the 21st century, was consolidated with paintings full of symbology and an oneiric language. The designs of the custom-made costumes to dress my characters began to demand not only a disguise that communicated an exterior image but also had the capacity to transmit concepts.

In my work, the clothing and scenography that accompany the protagonist characters require the creation of very well-analyzed and planned designs because they will represent that unmovable suit or second skin, which will accompany them forever as a personality to continue narrating their discourses. The aim is not only to grant a personality identity to the proposed human models... all other non-human components must also have their own unique and individual characteristics to turn them into structures capable of transmitting concepts and meanings.

Precisely in my creative process regarding the design of these non-human elements... From a clothing item that was, up to a certain point, normal, I experimented with new materials, being careful not to fall into the manufacture of exaggerated or artificial suits... I began with the possibilities offered by the suggestive textures of transparent fabrics and their capacity to simulate nudity in all its meaning.

I found in paper and cardboard materials with which conceptual and subjective dresses could be manufactured to go beyond the mere sense given to a garment objectively. In the course of this period, dreams and their proposals as an inspirational source, as well as that magical language, were replaced by a need for a transformation, perhaps more metaphysical and psychological, that would more broadly cover my new themes and interests that I wanted to propose in other directions.

This new language arrived accompanied by the necessary change to a more realistic pictorial technique that served to transmit this new model of sensations and feelings whose reality needed a different type of truthfulness.

Having reached this point at the beginning of 2009, I discovered other materials with new expressive capacities for my ideas; these were: plastics and synthetics, which offered me the possibility of a renewing proposal for a new prototype of alternative clothing.

The predecessor painting to Ice (2010) was my painting Alternating Current (2009), where I first showed figures dressed in bubble wrap. My interest in this new transparent and semi-transparent plastic material wanted to symbolize above all:

Looking inward through the wrapping that protects the fragility where the answers lie.

In my research on the presence of plastic in the paintings of realist and hyperrealist artists, this material began to be represented starting in the 1960s of the last century. Two main approaches have been designated to plastic: one objective as is, and the other with a more complex and subjective meaning.

On the one hand, we will find this material in some examples of North American hyperrealism among the iconic painters of that country in this style, as well as in the work of extraordinary Spanish hyperrealist artists, all of them with examples that, from those years to the present, have had as their main purpose to reproduce with extreme detail an iconography of emblematic commercial everyday

objects, among which are some examples precisely of plastic bags and wrappers that function merely as what they are objectively; this selection also includes other artists with more academic realist styles dedicated to Still life. In general, we would be talking about a type of genre related to still lifes in whose compositions these new materials are proposed as part of modern and contemporary furniture.

But it is especially in the realism of Spanish painters from this same decade of the 60s where, although sparingly, representations of plastics appear as wrapping and transparent material that contributes to the general meaning of these existential and reflective realist works on subjective concepts.

Undoubtedly, the work of these Spanish painters has influenced the proposals I intend with my personal painting: Antonio Lopez, Eduardo Naranjo, and especially Cristobal Toral (Packaged for Travel, 1980) with their mysterious characters and objects wrapped with fabrics and bindings with conceptual meanings, without forgetting to mention the Chilean Claudio Bravo, all of them with proposals more akin to each other and different in comparison with the hyperrealists mentioned above.

Two years after I started manufacturing my suits made of bubble wrap in 2009, the extraordinary Australian hyperrealist painter Robin Eley presented a series of magnificent realistic paintings in 2011, with nude models who were wrapped in transparent plastics… This coincidence at very similar moments at the end of the first decade of the 21st century makes me think and wonder what were the coincidences that influenced both of us to begin using plastic not only as a companion material but as a suit that somehow functioned as a second skin full of meanings. Of course, there are several artists who have used this material, and among the new generations of realist painters, we are beginning to see excellent recreations, particularly of bubble wrap, more commonly.

But let's return to our described painting... Perhaps the most intriguing element of Ice (2010) is that strange structure that the model holds in her hands. My previous paintings had been showing, as a fundamental part of the characters, objects that were more than just a symbol but were the representation of:

A kind of codified memory about identity.

In this idea, for an object to be able to modify its apparent aspect and utility for other meanings that went beyond its everyday function, I was always influenced by the works of Bosch and Brueghel the Elder, as well as the complex religious iconography of New Spanish colonial painting of saints and virgins.

But in the 1990s, the time I lived in Mexico City contributed to my formation with a new artistic criterion on creative conceptualization that was expressed through performances, installations, and especially with object art and its capacity to decontextualize.

I must, of course, highlight that for me, cinema is perhaps the main and most sophisticated source of inspiration that regroups all these artistic expressions, contributing with its vision the effect of reality that I intend to show for my paintings.

The code/entity. In a figurative painting, the possibilities for describing our ideas are immense and at the same time very limited; our creativity only has the space provided by a canvas for the elaboration of a static image that can narrate very complex reasonings. The intriguing object held by the woman in this painting is a product based on the prototypes I developed for my project called *Postestertorismo*, from 1992 and 1994. The design and appearance of this structure are amorphous and abstract in nature.

Its nature has mimetic capabilities of transfiguration that allow it to adopt the form of a biological organism, but also the diversity of other materials. The code/entity is the conceptual representation of a living entity with the capacity to diagnose and explore other beings, acting as a translator and code reader. The code/entity, with its mimetic capacity, presents us with a portrait of how it views and diagnoses the model, translating her semi-transparent suit as if it were ice, and the character and her concerns with an appearance in the form of screws.

A woman performs her own interdisciplinary performance, showing the ice and screws object art designed for her... ephemeral in its concept of existence that sensually melts in her hands, aching from the cold... The woman experiences her existential loneliness in the middle of that empty environment... She looks in one direction without looking at us because for her, we do not exist...

There is a time to decipher the codes of internal questions, with hands that suffer the melted cold whose memory will only remain in the memory of pieces of metal…

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Alternating Current



Alternating Current, 2010, Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm © Edgar Mendoza



Alternating Current

2010, Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm

"Direct current" and "Alternating current" are the two main types of electric currents that we use.

"Direct current" is not so powerful, its transmission is compact and short, as well as being linear and in one direction.

"Alternating current" can be transformed from a high power to a short one in both directions, its undulating movements are transported and connected by means of transformers for its transmission as needed without taking into account the order of the connection poles.

This simple but complex description of the "alternating" electrical method generated in me this symbolic metaphor in which two female characters mutually and alternately feed each other's capabilities.

"Alternating current" to transmit and adapt its purpose needs "transformers", the cages symbolize that function.
A cage is an open mystery, from inside or outside, everything can be looked through.... but being inside is not the same as being outside, which is why cages can be transformative symbols.

Between these two powerful women, there is the capacity to adapt in their communication. Only they know what their internal and secret dialogue is, and although they may seem like similar clones, there are radical differences between them. It is not known which one could be more powerful or dominant than the other, in fact it does not matter, since both have the ability to transform their meaning as needed.

Two characters feeding each other in the middle of a dystopian landscape, apparently inert or inanimate, inviting the viewer to observe and discover their meaning, and beyond a comprehensible explanation, results in a silent and abstract explanation.

They show their nudity not in the erotic sense, but through a veiled, protected and semi-transparent invitation, so that we look inside ourselves, a mirror effect.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

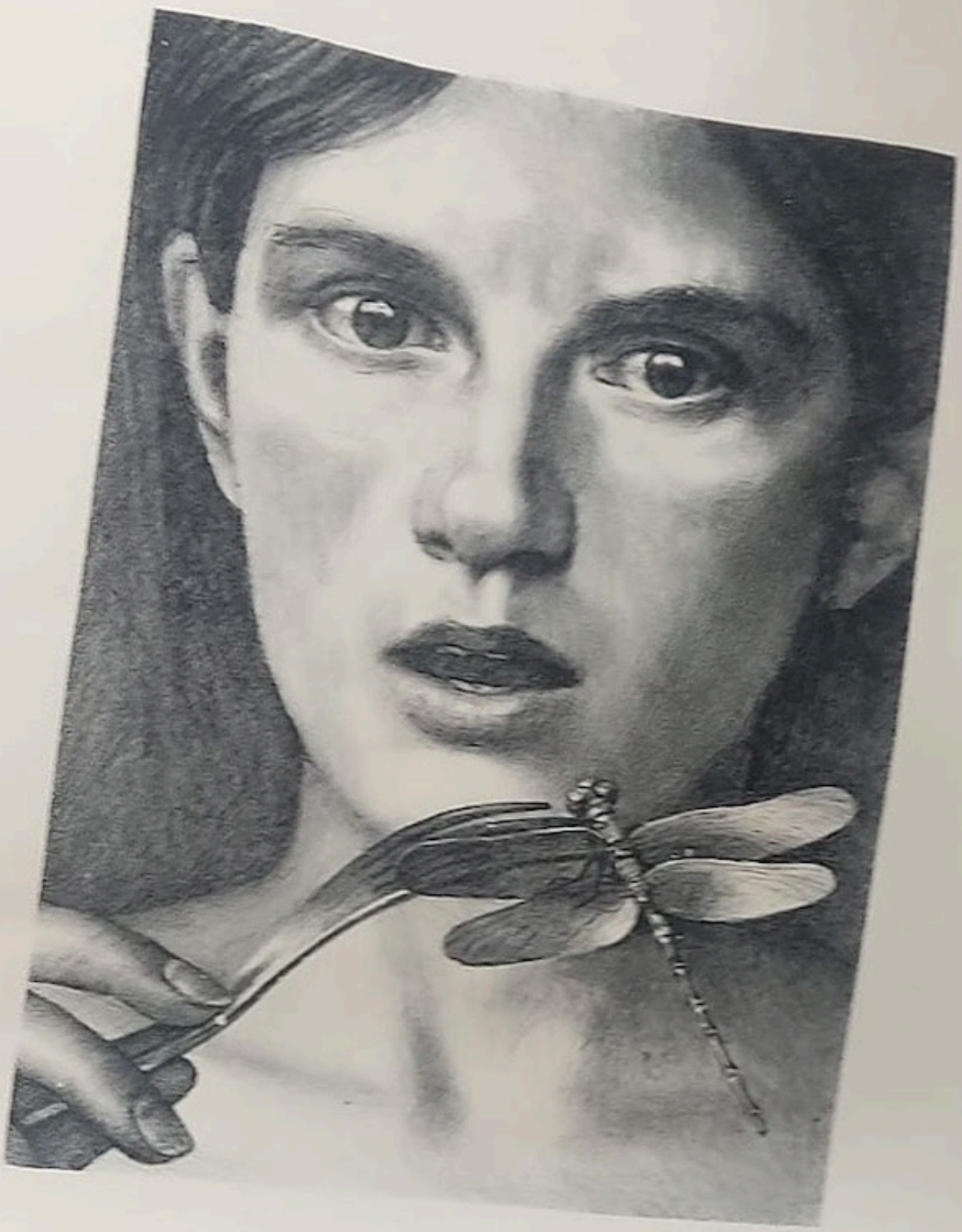
Entomophagous



Entomophagous, 2009, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 60 cm © Edgar Mendoza







Entomophagous

2009, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 60 cm

The premise of this painting in a first stage is presented as a metaphor for the necessary sustenance to exist. But the food displayed in the scene is an implausible dish, indicating that what we are seeing is not exactly what it seems... that it goes further. In one part of its narrative, this painting could seem like an allegorical reflection on how every organism requires a variety of sustenance according to its nature and circumstances, and according to the type of hunger it has, whether physical, mental, or existential... There is something to this viewpoint, without dismissing it...

As a particular detail to consider at this beginning, the character has been designed as a predator who is devouring not a butterfly as prey, but another impeccable predator in the insect kingdom, like the dragonfly.

The design of the general scene of this painting is inspired by the way the Flemish painter Brueghel the Elder, who has greatly influenced my work, depicts metaphors in an anecdotal style.

I wanted to represent, in a clean and concise way, a kind of aphorism or visual proverb that synthesizes the entire meaning in a simple image to function like the proverb, "The big fish eats the small fish." I allow myself to elaborate another of my own for this painting that reflects in its first part on food.

Eat it even if you don't want to, because if you don't, another will eat it...

Up to this point, the narration has presented this entomophagous and anthropophagous woman who preys and observes us fixedly to reflect on her nutritional metaphor.

For the staging, she is wearing a nightgown because perhaps she is dreaming in the middle of that dreamlike landscape that does not belong or is indifferent to the other reality she wants us to see.

The character who eats insects wants us to look her straight in the eyes to propose an interaction with her... she needs to create a story about a strange dish to capture our attention... and once captured, to expose what truly interests her...

This protagonist wants us to learn to distinguish the differences between certain reflective concepts, so that we empathize with her and her personal background from where she will launch her second reflection.

First, we must identify whether she is eating or devouring... to be conscious ourselves that we are truly observing and not just looking... In this way of interacting with the spectator, she subtly suggests trying to educate our instinct so that we know how to differentiate. Why? To differentiate between what the balance of reason and the imbalance of unreason mean, between the ambition to possess and wanting more than we need to be more than we are... To differentiate the dichotomy between being or not being...

Second part... The differences and the transmission of the interactive experiment between spectator / entomophagist... Does this painting succeed in transmitting this experiment?

Entomophagist (2009) is a work that is part of a series of paintings that has as one of its conceptual principles... The philosophical dilemma of existence...

I have been expressing this concern in various ways in the previous and subsequent paintings that surround this work.

When we ask ourselves something repeatedly since we were little... we end up seeing that something in everything that crosses our path as if it were a coincidence.

Around 1985 at the age of 18, long before I wanted to be a painter, I first saw the movie, Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott in 1982. Later I read the novel, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968)" by Philip K. Dick, which is the original source of this science fiction story. From the beginning, I felt completely identified with that universe that posed the same reflection that troubled me about...

The dilemma of being, existing, and being conscious of it...

This concept would gradually manifest as a constant in my paintings; all my characters throughout my career as a painter reflect being bearers of this concern as if they needed us to acknowledge their existence.

All of them throughout my work in each painting transform and substitute... They are no longer the portrait of someone or the objective representation of something... They are now the others who have acquired a new identity... Hence the dilemma of why it is fundamental for them that we understand why it is useful to know how to differentiate.

But let's go directly to the reason for this proposed second reflection... For every person of the human race, the idea of balance has different meanings that influence their individual concepts of happiness.

Happiness is an emotional and relative state in which well-being and feelings of fulfillment are manifested. But does happiness only belong to people? If we consider in this second reflection a creative experiment that includes other consciousnesses, such as those of animals for example, or going further, even endowing the woman painted in this very painting with a consciousness…

In her apparent reality, does she exist or is she just a painting? What is the category of existence that we attribute to the characters and beings who star in our stories as interlocutor mirrors and their own identity characteristics. Are they just the mere copy of a model whose conceptual narrative is only an anecdote to entertain?

Of course, not all these characters manage to interact, talk, or just whisper to a spectator, but those who succeed, even if they are artificial, perhaps already belong, like us humans, to that place of consciousness whose philosophical dilemma grants the capacity to be and to exist.

The contemporary phenomenon of AI and the advances in robotics begin to give more meaning, even if it is still very distant, to the approaches that science fiction has proposed for decades. But the figure of automatons is lost much further back in time with "other models of human manufacturing" that we forget are very similar in essence; spirits, gods, and ghosts, to name just a few that have already been accepted by our centuries-old beliefs as beings authorized to wander among us...

In the multiplicity of realities, perhaps what matters least to the woman in this painting and those of her kind or similar, is our pretentious human opinion, because simply... She has already decided to exist.

That water well painted on a panel looked so real that the birds crashed and died believing that it existed...

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Two Pilares II



Two Pilares II, 2009, Oil on Canvas, 50 x 73 cm © Edgar Mendoza

Two Pilares II

2009 Oil on Canvas, 50 x 73 cm

I imagined you helping me, but it was only my voice.

There, in the confines, the sky battles the earth to determine who has dominion over that strip of the horizon...

In 2009, my work began to feature paintings with better-balanced colors that provided a greater effect of reality and truthfulness to my images. Throughout the previous year, my color technique underwent a final transitional stage that sought to clean up my palette in favor of harmony between warm and cool tones.

This painting titled Two Pillars II (2009) represents the first example in my production where a harmonic coloring in stable forces was achieved; that balance, which had not been fully achieved before, confirmed to me the great importance of adequately understanding the proper use of color and how it impacts each of the structures involved in the design of a work. Of course, this research into my own vision of reality and the way to balance colors to represent it is in constant technical review, growing alongside the other areas of construction for my artistic designs.

In a concise but very complex explanation for realist painters to grasp in practice, it is not just about interspersing spaces with brushstrokes or cool and warm tasks, creating a visual mix as if it were a messy multi-colored display. What is sought is to achieve visual compensation between the different weights and sizes of the warm and cool colors existing in an image. For example, a sunset with a heavy weight of warm colors will be well compensated by areas of cool colors whose tones have the same frequency, which serves to enrich or enhance the discourse. Similarly, in the opposite effect with an environment predominantly made up of cool colors, the presence of warm colors in the right proportion will achieve a well-leveled atmosphere, as is precisely the case with this painting.

Two Pillars II (2009) is the second version inspired by the painting titled with the same name, made three years earlier. One of its important features to highlight is its handling of color, which has been previously described and served as a starting point as a reference for subsequent works.

When a design has several well-resolved structures as a whole, it generates a painting that satisfies various aspects and needs in the spectators and in the creator himself...

The first version from 2006 had practically exactly those characteristics, but it called for a new, refreshed attempt with better-developed colors and a script that expressed the new transformation of my concepts about the philosophical dilemma of existence.

As an important piece of information, the painting titled Three Pillars (2005) is the mother idea, which is completely linked to this series about multiple characters who have a landscape as their environment to develop their discourses. Three Pillars (2005) is also awaiting a new version soon.

It is curious how the changes we experience in our diverse stages of artistic maturation mutually impact each of the structures, both technical and conceptual. Around this period, it was not only necessary to make second representations of my previous designs, but my need for transformation was already seeking updates that would lead me to more realistic results that I had been observing in the technical environment of the great Spanish realist painters with whom I was beginning to associate.

But it is necessary to emphasize that when we realize a discovery that will give a turn to our painting, these changes are not improvised and are accompanied by many reflections and failed attempts that will allow us to become more conscious of the purpose of these modifications and the need to adopt them.

That oneiric and fantastic narrative, which still showed influences of a predecessor magical realism, began to be insufficient to transmit the new reflections that troubled me about the psychology of the characters and their ability to interact with the spectator through another new conceptual proposal.

The change of palette brought with it neutralized colors, and with them, the stories acquired a more serene character, necessitating a more uniform and overhead lighting. That physical aspect of the scenes with pastel color ranges generated atmospheres whose calm invited reflection on deeper, more basic, and elemental themes.

They were more conducive environments for formulating internal questions without high contrasts or darkness, and the technique employed should be painted with a much purer and more complex realistic style than the one I had managed to reproduce until that moment. With Two Pillars II (2009), this search begins, and its characteristics make it a piece that is among my favorites despite its limitations in a constant transformation to be corrected.

Successes and advances are more authentic when they have the original freshness of imperfections by their side... That is why new versions of the same idea or design are so difficult, as the saying goes in cinema, sequels were never good... but there are always exceptions, as in the case of this second version.

With the work Multiple Personalities, from the year 2000, I began to develop a concept that later transformed into the creation of individuals with the capacity to duplicate or clone themselves in greater numbers. Through this symbolic multiplication, themes related to internal psychology, both clinical and philosophical, could be proposed, but also, in another context, to expose concerns about the existential possibilities of diverse models of artificial or non-human metaphysical consciousness.

Two Pillars II (2009) shows a double personality that dialogues in silence with itself, trying to maintain balance to resolve the dilemma it carries within as a war. Between them, there is the communication of an allied consciousness or inner voice that asks to be heard to indicate when to turn on the light. Anchored in that city are anti-aircraft balloons, witnesses to a battle that has already begun. Both women wear suits made of semi-transparent paper, a symbolic design that will adopt other forms and materials such as bubble wrap.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

The picnic



***The picnic**,* 2008, Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm © Edgar Mendoza









The picnic

2018, Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm

The snack is perhaps the painting of my production that has generated the most controversy among viewers when they see this explicit scene for the first time, which can be unpleasant for some and prevents them from continuing to read the meaning of its message.

A message whose intention is not only to show a gruesome scene without more, but to go further in a conversation that the character has with herself about her inner being that is in constant transformation.

The first aspect to analyze in this painting, would deal with our perception of what should be considered beautiful.

I have always liked the so-called beautiful motifs referring for example to landscapes, still lifes or human models full of harmony. I am convinced that just by painting a well-executed flower, one can masterfully transcend.

Who could not like that long list of themes that awaken pleasant values in us regardless of what fashions and ideals dictate. But my approaches over the years have also found a suitable ground to express many of my concerns in the territory of what is considered incorrect, macabre, twisted or unpleasant.

Ideas that are politically incorrect for some are very necessary for others.

Another characteristic that my paintings in this line must have is that their message must not have a moral sense as a priority, but rather a reflection on the limits of human personalities and their existential readings.

The concept of beauty is relative for each person, what for some may be sharply unpleasant, for others it is an opportunity to expand those aesthetic limits of beauty.

I do not believe that art has to fulfill only the function of pleasing, it can also question and disturb, and if the proposal requires it, one must dare to explore those areas and take the risks to achieve the intended meaning.

This painting marked the end and the beginning of a new stage in my work with a technique and concepts that experienced a change in procedure and language.

The symbolic, fantastic and dreamlike themes that had been feeding my previous paintings inspired by dreams would begin to diminish in 2008 and would gradually be replaced by conceptual proposals directed towards an internal psychological analysis.

A story about doubles, clones, replicas, twins or doppelgangers.
In *The snack* the characters seek their own self-analysis to obtain answers about themselves and for this they resort to a double with whom they can converse, but above all discuss in their privacy about those personalities that we do not want to recognize as part of ourselves but that we avoid talking about because they are unpleasant, contradictory or violent.

The painting aims to be a mirror for the viewer to look at themselves and reflect on the possibility of finding an answer to the whys of their own imbalances.

As a kind of stage design, the painting shows us the theatrical staging of a metaphor starring two women who are actually one, interpreting a story whose experimental genre theme is called *The snack*.

The furniture of the setting accompanies the protagonists through symbols, reinforcing the narrative through a pair of chairs arranged with a table, a white tablecloth, cutlery for eating and drinking, and a clothesline from which X-rays hang in the middle of a green field with a sky full of clouds.

Does the second woman want to eat the first, or is the first woman forcing the second to eat her?

Is the first woman forcing the second to cut off a piece of her arm to eat herself?

Or is the second woman the one who dominates, forcing the first to devour herself?

The fact that one of the women is cutting off a piece of the other's arm to use as possible food is actually only suggested by the series of instruments present, but beyond what this may mean for each spectator, the approach also raises an unknown about what role each of these two characters plays and whether there is a dominant figure between them that guides us to formulate a diagnosis about what is happening to her.

The objects on the table are arranged towards one of the characters, as is the case of the glass of water, which, in addition to indicating who may be the next to eat, proposes the interpretation of water that cleanses and purifies everything.

At this point, it is worth highlighting the symbol that refers to the circular, supported by the shape of the round table that raises a concept of feedback.

The circular symbolizes the constant struggle, the cyclical nature of things, the eternal return of cycles that end and begin.

In a continuous manner and synthesizing the two women as one, the character is swallowing herself, giving rise to the representation of a rebirth of things that never disappear but only undergo eternal transformations.

Finally, the scene symbolically shows some x-rays that confirm the idea of an internal examination of the protagonists, but that by being hung from a clothesline create new and small metaphors within each other.

Some x-rays that hang, drying in the sun and the wind. We have washed them and all that remains is to wait for them to dry.

The explicit metaphor of cannibalism proposed by *The snack* moves within these limits and risks being classified as a mere grotesque image without any further meaning, but that is precisely the challenge that this painting aims to address, that of transgressing not without cause, but with a reason to capture attention and propose a complex analysis.

It is important for an artist to be aware that when we paint a metaphor in a very realistic way, we create the sensation in the viewer that this image is real and true, so we must be careful not to distract the reading and the conceptual meaning that we are proposing with the images; we must seek a balance to transmit the message.

The snack was awarded an Honorable Mention in 2008 by the International Competition of the Foundation for the Arts and Artists of the European Museum of Modern Art (MEAM), and is part of its collection.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

The surgeons



The surgeons, 2008, Oil on Canvas, 97 x 130 cm © Edgar Mendoza

The surgeons

2008, Oil on Canvas, 97 x 130 cm

This painting represents not only the starting point as the design that inspired The snack (2008) and Extraction of the stone of madness (2012)... it is also a key painting as a bridge between my way of technically painting reality up to that moment and how it would begin to show significant advances in color and details of truthfulness.

This work reflects the great influence I had from the Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum... whose pictorial style and representation of his stories I was interested in assimilating in the best possible way. Given my limited circumstances in several aspects, especially technical, and the inability to have seen the work of this artist live, the tool that has always allowed me to elucidate procedures of other artists, living or dead, was activated in me. Of course, this has nothing to do with the true technique employed by such great figures of painting whose mysteries they only share with privileged disciples and prodigious academies of very difficult entry. But the barriers against us also activate a spirit that, although ignorant, is equally daring to turn us into good imitators capable of reproducing the copy of what we admire. It is precisely in this process of imitation of styles where artists in training find a propitious field for experimentation to discover their resources and limitations.

The best part of having influences from others is admitting them without prejudice so that they give us their secrets while we grow by patiently observing them... Then perhaps one day we wake up with one less influence and one small step more of our own identity.

As a narrative painter that I am, Nerdrum's universe captivated me from the beginning. Pilar discovered him on a trip she made to N.Y. where she bought one of his books to bring it as a Christmas gift in the year 2000.

All kinds of language generate a coded identity that is activated when a receiver coincides with the same interests that they manage to read by having the same nature. This instinctive communication makes us experience a great affinity for the ideas of others, making us feel as if we ourselves were the authors of that same idea. Identity defines us and differentiates us from others by our individual characteristics, but above all, identity communicates its essence through feelings and emotions so as not to remain just as a mathematical concept. When we see a scene that makes us remember a memory, our identity is sensorially activated as a translator that serves to introduce us to the scene... but from our own experience so that we have a better reading tailored to us.

That darkness of the Baroque, which in my opinion Odd Nerdrum reinterprets very well, even bringing it to a modern language, influenced my paintings to have dark contexts whose lighting produced strong chiaroscuro contrasts.

Every Mexican realist painter of my generation has passed through the influences of the Mexican masters, Cauduro and Arturo Rivera, and I personally also through the language of the masters Benjamín Domínguez, Rafael Coronel, Francisco Corzas, or Guillermo Meza... In the marvelous work of all of them, we find a marked weight of European and New Spanish Baroque painting. My work for almost a decade between the years 2000 to 2008 became a mixture of all these painters who inspired my production with paintings of a marked Neo-Baroque style and a Neo-Realist narrative that also moved between magical realism and the oneiric language. That same Neo-Baroque language requested an abundance of symbols that could decontextualize objects to give them magical and strange capacities... Then my personal identity modeled the form of my ideas and placed them in those dimly lit darknesses between the shadows and the contrasting lights.

In the design of these scenes, the landscapes opened spaces that granted dimensions to each of the present elements; the technical challenge of distances and a strong approach to representing the enveloping air between solid structures and ethereal effects appeared. Given the inherent Baroque elements of this style, whose abundance contains blocks of various genres in the same setting, I dedicated myself to planning the best possible convergence between each form and the reactions that are provoked between them. To work and better understand the high contrasts of chiaroscuro in a painting, it helps to have developed the fundamentals of drawing because its graphic language facilitates the visualization of the accidents that are achieved when we experiment with the juxtaposition between solid layers and layers of glazes. That variety of effects works very well in shadowy environments, enriches them, and prepares them to house the other fundamental part of a painting... its tone and theme. One of the emotions that is most activated in the codes that I try to transmit about my own identity... is nostalgia.

As a child, I loved climbing onto the rooftops to patiently observe the sunsets; I watched carefully as the sun went down, leaving its traces on the ground and in the clouds. The ancient painters have inspired me... but much more education I have received since childhood by contemplating those twilight periods... Among the natural phenomena that occurred in each season of the year, it was the rains with their lightning and thunderbolts that caused me fear during those times when my parents still had black hair. I learned to overcome the fear of storms by facing the rain face-to-face, just as we do when we must mature in each stage of life if we wish to know the mysteries of the next stage.

In Durango, the sky fell, especially in the summers, there around the months of August and September; I confronted the downpours by making waterproof suits out of plastic bags that I tied from my feet to my head. I also began to enjoy those rainy afternoons from the rooftops, just as I did with the sunsets, observing and feeling every difference between the cloudless skies... the neutral and serene drizzles of gray... and the majestic storms that with their thunder altered the palpitations in my heart. I became very assiduous in walking through the streets of Durango while it rained; it was like continuing to search more and more to make peace with the storms... But the best part of all was rediscovering that spectrum of yellow light that appeared from time to time at the end of a storm with its golden color of a twilight sun that veiled everything in its path and that I felt... as the color of my own nostalgia. The oldest memory I have of this golden twilight light places me in front of the tent of a town fair that had two representations of skeletons dressed in Elizabethan clothes painted very detailed... The bells announced the end of an afternoon that reflected its clouds in the puddles of a past rain... and just as quickly as it came, it went... in a moment everything turned into that aged yellow color that only remains for a few minutes as a remembrance of the fleeting existence of a child looking at two skeletons. Lighting has been a primordial factor in transmitting the anecdotes described above; I still experience that color of my own nostalgia when the light of the sunset filters or projects through the blinds, illuminating corners and fleetingly lighting the paths where I walk.

My experiences are symbolically represented through designs of forms, colors, and concepts that I use to largely transmit the necessary nostalgia that accompanies my identity to bring back those longed-for sensations that transmitted feelings and moments of consciousness to me.

The surgeons (2008) is the painting that represents the moment of greatest technical and conceptual maturity in my Neo-Baroque tenebrist era. The painting shows a painstaking finish as a result of a long investigation process in every detail. Here we observe the elements of the composition participating more harmoniously not only with the purification of the ochre colors that were excessive in previous paintings but with a much more balanced palette between cool and warm tones. The sensation of the enveloping air has been resolved in a better way to contribute to the truthfulness of the terms, and every detail has been worked on more meticulously with the purpose of transmitting a superior realistic chiaroscuro well drawn around the entire scene.

To develop the meaning of this work, I have believed it convenient to first transmit the reflections and observations about: influences, codes, identity, nostalgia, memories, the observation of landscapes and natural phenomena, the color of light, emotions, consciousness. Because all this is a vital part of

what is intended to be expressed in each work; each of the concepts and languages are inevitably imbued with all these accidental experiences of the life of an artist that escape our control. Observing the evolution of these details and their reiterative influences indicates the complexity that can be behind each story and the capacities available to express it in the synthesis of a painting.

Surgery of bonds... The symbolism headed by these two pairs of twins, of course, belongs to the conceptual project on multiple personalities developed in other similar works; however, one of the priorities in this painting is to show, like a window, the existence of a more complex world full of arguments that respond to the unknowns generated by the world of these multiplied characters. For the spectator to be able to experience the need to want to see more stories related to this universe, it was necessary to build a new and improved version of that reality that had been presented previously... for this, the modifications shown precisely in The surgeons (2008) were proposed, whose objectives are met in most of their purposes, both technically and conceptually. As I have mentioned, this painting manages to surpass the quality standards that had been achieved up to that moment, making it a unique piece of its generation. But incongruently, this work is also part of another list of undervalued paintings whose virtues have not been appreciated in their just measure by a public that has shown indifference to the significant progress of the artist and his best exercises.

The concept and foundation of The surgeons (2008) is the bond, which represents the union and tie of one person or thing to another. This story is the representation of not only a duplicated character with their own personal concerns or reflections with themselves... but also another model is presented in the figure of a doubly linked couple. Therefore, we are seeing duplicated characters in the scene who interact as individuals and also as couples, creating a confusion of multiple possibilities about who the companions are and what functions they perform through their characterizations and behaviors that reflect expressions.

Another capacity of the doubles is the antagonistic representation of opposing symbologies, as happens between white and black or light and darkness, which can have positive or negative connotations. The differences between the two women are clear; through their stereotypes, they may be pretending what they are not by relying on their characterizations... Both the blonde model and the black-haired one seem to play very defined roles in a story about submissive and dominant postures, but in the concept of the bond, the spectator is sought to formulate more possible options... Are the women in white being manipulated, or are they the ones manipulating?

In short, this painting is the metaphorical and symbolic representation of the bonds between these four women who show us their stories and characteristics in the middle of a setting where they perform a hair-cutting performance. One of those seated waits to give the order to cut what is needed, but cutting is not in her hands. She is very clear about what she wants but depends on the other so that that cut is exactly the right one; the simple cut of a lock can signify an entire surrender of dominant trust or the full behavior of a figure in submission. One of the duplicates has had her hair cut; the necessary surgery has already been performed on her as part of this mystical ritual we are witnessing; one of them, who is the only one who looks at us, carries an umbrella as a protective banner to shelter us all from malicious bonds. The expressions of all of them are barely distinguishable, subtle... rather like the non-existent gestures that people usually have in the territory of dreams.

As a final detail, the seated women are blind; they orient themselves towards the nothingness of their unreal world to be able to see in our real world... They and the others awaken more questions than necessary in us about the relationship they have with all that barren land where wandering clouds circulate as if they were the surgical representation of the X-rayed spirit of that strange place.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Two Pilares



***Two Pilares**,* 2006, Oil on Canvas, 50 x 73 cm © Edgar Mendoza

Two Pilares

2006, Oil on Canvas, 50 x 73 cm

We live until the last person remembers us...

From the highest summit, a labyrinth is observed, a lost city with questions from the present and answers from the past that travel like clouds from one place to another...

By 2006, my work continued to display images whose fantastic and dreamlike meanings were the necessary language to argue the path traveled up to that moment about my identity. Although in reality, my paintings from that stage, which lasted approximately 10 years, between 1998 and 2008, are more of a kind of metaphor that wants to tell stories similar to dreams but with an still undefined intention about my existential concerns. At that time, I continued to use dreams, myths, and beliefs of an ordinary or popular nature as a source of inspiration, but now from a different location in my condition as a Mexican foreigner residing in Spain. For a couple more years, I would continue to prioritize the discourse in my work over technique, not precisely because I considered that content more relevant, but rather for the simple ignorant reason of not having sufficient knowledge about color and its theories, which I did not receive in my self-taught training.

It is there but we don't see it until we discover it...

The painting Two Pillars (2006) was built around those limitations, but its creation as the first proposal that inspired a second version made two years later allows us to compare it and draw conclusions.

Without lagging behind, this first version definitely has its own personality that is coherent with the narrative of its time to offer us a very well-composed and interesting painting within its group, and although its handling of color perceives an attempt to adequately combine warm and cool tones seeking harmony and an effect of greater reality, it does not achieve the proposed results precisely because of its technical colorist incapacity. But this does not prevent this piece from being considered iconic, thanks to the quite well-assembled whole between characters, clothing, accessories, and symbols that are distributed in that landscape full of allegorical and poetic structures.

As a background, the painting Multiple Personalities, made during the year (2000), with its proposal served as inspiration for the creation of these characters who are seeking in the figure of their own symbolic duplicate, the self-knowledge that defines the whys of their behaviors..."

But let's return to our painting in question: The main theme that was intended to be transmitted in Two Pillars (2006), and which was difficult to express through the two figures facing each other in that environment, had to do with a psychological dilemma. The so-called Emotional Attachments in psychology, whose patterns generated since childhood affect all our interpersonal relationships that we will have with other people throughout our lives.

As you can see, this theme was a very complicated challenge to represent, and the way to do it was by insinuating the expressive attitudes that each of the two personalities is reflecting. One apparently serene and patient and the other apparently restless and nervous... one avoiding conflict and the other confronting it...

Precisely this genre of fantastic and dreamlike style reflected in the series of paintings I made during those years was beginning to show those limitations that would make me emigrate to another genre. The fantasy and magic reflected by those symbols lost their validity for me, but at that moment, it was the honesty that continues to endure in my work that granted it the coherence of its time so that Two Pillars (2006) is valued in its fair measure.

Two figures with different personalities have a communication problem... For them to understand each other, one must yield and the other concede. Faced with this dilemma that prevents them from communicating, the metaphor places the structure of a labyrinth behind them as a representation of how difficult it will be to find a solution, but also as the determination to enter it and seek remedies... The symbolic presence of an object, the umbrella, stands out in the painting, which has been used in other paintings of this period as a multifaceted, protective, and miraculous amulet, but at the same time as a comfort zone that we grant the capacity to self-manipulate ourselves so as not to leave it... Both are dressed in elemental mystical objects that protect them thanks to their beliefs... The painting shows us for the first time suits of wrinkled paper that do not necessarily clothe but rather protect like figurative shields with medieval or baroque reminiscences. With their golden armor, they pretend to protect themselves from a threat, which more than physical is psychological, whose mystery is realizing that they are the same person. In my work, symbols can generally show meanings that actually express the opposite, expanding their interpretive possibilities to give the spectator more than one possible reading.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

The flying chair



The flying chair, 2002, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 116 cm © Edgar Mendoza

The flying chair

2002, Oil on Canvas, 81 x 116 cm

The transition I experienced at the end of the 20th century, between the influences of a past decade and the beginning of a new 21st century, resulted in a series of paintings that would reflect the essence of my first ten years in a new expression of symbolic and magical reality. This would confirm my resistance against the contemporary global artistic dictate, which was and continues to be a detractor of any figuration labeled as costumbrista (focused on everyday customs) or of painters with an improvised, self-taught background without institutionalized conceptual structures.

From those paintings I had executed in a style framed by old “realism,” other works emerged that would represent scenes through an objective reality, but with a language deeply rooted in my identity, which would largely align with that literary style so popular in Mexico: “Latin American magical realism.”

How many times have I wondered about the type of “realism” that could characterize my work throughout the growth process between the years 1989 and 2026.

My work finds itself under the total influence of the diverse movements that have represented figuration and reality throughout history.

But the mid-19th-century French movement, with its main representative Gustave Courbet, has a special section in its manifesto with which I essentially identify, even though my work manifests other timeless purposes.

In the “Pavilion of Realism” of 1855, severe criticism would officially and very disparagingly define those who painted that way as “realists” and their manifestation as “realism.”

During the second half of that century, “realism” was considered an obscene, ugly, crude, and anti-academic movement opposed to neoclassicism, academicism, and romanticism.
As a new manifestation, “realism” was represented by groups of followers at that time across Europe, parts of Asia, and some countries in the Americas, through a range of proposals and genres that also posited the literal and true objective description of the era.

But as I have mentioned before, one of those important points with which I feel identified is regarding the analysis itself of what “realism” meant and its profound conviction to portray that objectivity of reality exactly as it occurred amidst its terrible social inequalities.

In a world of current contemporary privileges, where pictorial postmodernity evades the ideological commitments with which it feels it has no obligations. For us, who have turned our vision of reality into a highly processed and immediate disguise due to technology and the culture of speed, it is difficult to slow down and understand through facts why that 19th-century criticism pointed so pejoratively, with its definition of “realism,” at a painting that was considered unnecessary. It transmitted a rawness that no one wanted to see, yet which imposed itself with the overwhelming misery of a working and rural class vilely abused by the industrial revolution, contrasting abusively with a bourgeoisie that wanted everything without hesitation to satisfy its needs.

We are therefore talking about a very complex environment to be conveyed by the very artists who promulgated the objectivity of that reality in those years. And, as I mentioned, it is very difficult to understand for current artists who enjoy unimaginable resources that were nonexistent in that dehumanized century.

That way of life had to do with extreme misery that reflected stark contrasts in the most minute survival details of a nauseating life without resources for the exploited working classes, laborers, and peasants.

A malnourished and unhealthy society surviving slave-like workdays, plagued by diseases amidst crime, orphanhood, and a masked imperialism that provoked at will the monster of wars demanding men to die or be left as remnants.

“Realism” had to be criticized as that pretension of wanting to capture the disgusting and ordinary life of those foul-smelling people and their circumstances, in contrast to the virtues of a subjective idealization, made up with romanticism or canons of superfluous allegories about the beauty and order of a privileged few.

“When dictatorship is a fact, revolution is an obligation.”

–Almeida Prado

The fact that our current work is classified as “realist” undoubtedly carries a profound reflection on the simplicity and complexity of what it means to capture the "true existence" of things.

That which is “authentic” in what we show or relate—depending on the language used within that “reality”—to encompass what is known through a physical “objectivity,” or the “subjectivity” of how we perceive and live what we are observing.

What realism has meant in each historical moment across its generations has created a historical formula acting as a guide, indicating the paths that have already been explored and the territories where reality can still offer new versions and experimental proposals that allow our evolution to be conscious of our own contemporaneity.

“Current realism” is the constant regeneration of centuries of information that is updated with every technological discovery and existential philosophical approach. Its nature adapts to each circumstance and is a survivor inherent to the purest state of perpetual reality.

“Realism” finds its own evolutionary possibilities to be “contemporary” in an “autonomous” way, and its self-sufficient structure, centuries old, actually only cross-references the proposals of other artistic expressions to analyze their new starting points.

The emigrant

It was impossible to silence the sociocultural heritage of the beliefs I accumulated since childhood, with that particular way of perceiving the life of things “subjectively,” almost as if they were truths under a mystery that goes beyond reason in a believing society—because it needs them for its identity.

Religion, legends, the myths of illusions and hopes of a people that needs to keep dreaming even while awake, because they live in a world where everyone thinks alike and they do not want to be banished.

In that daily life, everything was interpreted with that inner gaze from an isolated and remote Durango, which only saw the outside as that which lay far beyond the hills and mountains.
Those foreign realities from outside, even if they held marvelous truths, only became unnecessary rumors that later formed part of our dictionary of the fantastic, ending up as just another belief.

Of course, I am speaking of popular idiosyncrasy and its misdirected ignorance, which likes to live without having to expand through the daring of deeds and actions that would allow them to leave their comfort zone and explore discoveries toward new paths.

Uprooting

Even if we cross borders to experience other existences, we will inevitably continue observing everything through the eyes of our primary identity. Because in looking, one not only sees, but also feels with the focus of a latent “past” that remains asleep so we can uproot ourselves in the distant lands of the “present,” which will make us return toward the “future,” a reunion with what we have always been.

Only by physically crossing the borders of almost everything do we verify the nature of a reality in all its nuances without being merely schematic; one must be present in that place so that no one else tells you about it with only their version.

“When the giant walks, he does not look to see if there is something small, and the small does not know that something can step on it, like ants crossing a highway.”

As we broaden our horizons, we acquire the capacity to distinguish the pros and cons in every place we discover as spokespersons and witnesses, especially artists who synthesize everything with their senses to propose an objective or subjective reflection on an event through an aesthetic and philosophical vision.

From childhood, we grow up yearning for destinies and jobs we will dedicate ourselves to through trades, professions, and vocations that, at first, are only fanciful illusions typical of a child's naivety.

But as we grow older, we begin to realize the difficulties of reaching them and the efforts required just to begin and commit to something.

Then will come a series of frustrations due to the impossibility of qualifying for certain tasks through a selectivity that tests the true capacities of the individual via their self-confidence, character, discipline, and perseverance.

Choosing a vocation depends on many circumstances, among which stand out the environment where you develop and the examples you have from family members and influential figures, positive or negative.

In 1978 I was 11 years old, in my 5th year of primary school amid the demands of a teacher who mistreated his students without any reprisal, and a radical change of school that forced me to start from scratch.

Perhaps symbolically, this change my parents brought about amidst adverse conditions would represent for my nature taking on a first role as the future "emigrant" who would begin to relapse in the search for new horizons to discover.

Leaving that first school represented in my childhood life a displacement that left behind the coexistence and teachings of a past that transformed into memories, replaced by a novel style of classes taught by a substitute teacher in a memorable lesson of discipline without aggression, and healthy competition among a new student body that I was discovering.

“No matter how adverse the conditions of that unknown environment may be, one must adapt to survive.”

That life, dressed in a well-ironed school uniform, unfolded against a national backdrop full of strange contrasts and the premieres of the moment... On one hand, the American influences of disco music competing with the popular song “La de la mochila azul”... Or the movie “Superman” or “Grease,” against conventional, folkloric cinema reflected in “Picardía mexicana” and “La ilegal.”

All this amidst a grave and controversial historical six-year presidential term in Mexico (1976-1982), led by President José López Portillo and his catastrophic oil-dependency strategy in an economy that initially had the highest national growth, only to plummet financially later with a 300% increase in the country's foreign debt.

The social sectors were darkened by the national outlook, and in my parents' house, like a sequence of bad omens, a series of additional car accidents were triggered that compromised the family economy and forced my father to desperately look for work in the United States.

“We don't truly believe in it until it happens to us.”

In 1979 my father went as a “mojado” (undocumented immigrant), but it went very poorly for him. He would write us melancholic letters that I reread because I yearned for his return so he could embrace my mother again.

Perhaps it was the time I saw them needing each other the most, just like I saw in movies and soap operas, but with the difference that “reality” surpassed fiction.

Since I left Durango and later Mexico, I too became a “mojado”, adding to the statistics of the 12.3 million Mexicans living abroad, of which surprisingly 97% (12 million) live in the United States, placing us as the second country worldwide with the largest number of emigrants.

As a child, I liked going to the fair that celebrated the city's founding every year, even if I didn't buy anything or climb onto any rides; I simply enjoyed watching people stroll and have a good time within their own means.

The “flying chairs” (swing rides) caught my attention a lot; they reminded me of the mythical prints of the “Voladores de Papantla” (Flyers of Papantla), whom up until that moment I only knew through illustrations.

I never got on them because I associated them with my fear of swings, although in my dreams I did long for them, like the conquered achievement in the first flight of a bird that throws itself into the void of its own insecurities and manages to survive.

“What for some is a truly impossible challenge, for others is an insignificance... There are those who migrate outward and those who turn inward to emerge with the answers they crave.”

Going further became my purpose, probably to relieve my father in his frustrated attempt to conquer his American dream that would pull him out of his own poverty.

Already on the path of painting in 1992, I did everything necessary to leave Durango—not as a “traveler,” but as an “emigrant,” which is different... the traveler is a nomad; the migrant a sedentary person who found the knowledge to build cathedrals.

We design projects to be able to build them thanks to our will, but also thanks to the support and the figure of the patron who can turn us from being a dreaming immigrant into an awakened resident who no longer needs to move.

When one has exiled oneself, one's motives follow close behind like a shadow dragged by the light projecting it.

And what fed a season one day can transform the next morning into another alternative that better reflects each new present.

We constantly abstract from everyday reality and the characteristics of our surroundings, becoming “creators of symbols” almost without realizing it.

We are continually attributing different versions to the same “object,” whether physically, sensorially, existentially, or psychologically.

Redefining “realism” and the narrative of my work in the early years of the 21st century led me to the most “surrealist” manifestation of my paintings.

But not as part of the artistic movement of the 1920s, which had objectives completely alien to my reality, but rather through the coincidence of my own experiences with that primary definition of “surrealism” that gave rise to such a famous pictorial style of the past.

By identifying with remote eras, even if our experiences are different, we set in motion a strange time-travel mechanism that allows us to invent possibilities for renewal between the past, the present, and the future.

When technically a greater execution of reality is achieved, the creation of our stories transmits their meanings with greater veracity, just as happens with cinematic special effects.

Complex ideas will then seem more real even if they are strange, as happens in the world that transcends conventional reality between the illogical, the absurd, the unconscious, and the dreamlike.

The irrational language that European surrealists interpreted in Mexico between 1930 and 1940 was living proof, from their outsider perspective, that reality surpassed fiction.

For André Breton, “that was the most surreal country in the world…”

For Mexicans of any geographic zone or social condition, it will simply continue to be the reality they are born into—a natural coexistence of syncretisms that have developed unique spiritual beliefs and a particular concept of "death" that goes beyond explanation with words.

The flying chair

This painting represented a 180º turn in my career because it was a starting point not only for my return to Spain in 2002 but also due to the patronage of the “Jiménez Godoy” family, who sponsored the project for their private collection between 2002 and 2006.

Each project will reflect coherence among all its parts if it has the central idea of a “theme” acting as a guiding thread. It will depend on the solidity of this “theme” for its entire general approach to have lesser or greater significance, providing the designer with a meaningful evolution.

The proposal for that initiative was programmed in blocks with paintings to be executed over 5 years, whose thematic expression would be supported through “dreams.”

Undoubtedly, that project, viewed from a distance, continues to serve as an important self-critical guide that allows me to reflect on what I should not do in my recent work and serves to strengthen the objectives and theories I intend to present in the future.

Another important particularity was the freedom granted by the collector, which brought with it the confidence for me to openly choose the summary of the concerns that inspired my accumulated identity.

And I arrived at the “dreamlike and symbolic” result that would best describe a new inclination not shown in previous paintings, whose language had been that of a more objective narrative.
Therefore, all my imaginative resources were put to work in search of proposals that spoke with an “unreal” Mexican language—a product of indigenous and Spanish mestizaje—but within a host country like Spain, famous for the great surrealist creators of the Generation of ’27.

This series, created in Murcia, Spain, reflects a compilation of influences that have been processed to be reinterpreted through an analysis based on the practical experimentation of my own objective and subjective emotions.

As a constant ever-present in my inspiration, we will find the mixture of several sources participating in the construction of my imaginary ideology with diverse examples:

- The supernatural with literary or cinematic references.
- The pictorial, folkloric, and popular.
- The magical and strange will be present as evidence of my own religious beliefs fused with legends.

In literature, the "magical realism" of Juan Rulfo or Gabriel García Márquez, as well as the Spanish baroque picaresque of Lazarillo de Tormes.

Without omitting the supernatural and surrealist cinema of the Mexican Roberto Gavaldón (Macario, 1960), the Spanish Luis Buñuel (Los olvidados, 1950), or "Italian neorealism" with Vittorio De Sica (Miracle in Milan, 1951), to mention just a few.

Pictorially, in the "Jiménez Godoy" collection series, diverse and extreme languages will dominate the ways of telling stories.

Bosch and Bruegel the Elder at times, then leaping to Mexican muralists like Diego Rivera or the Durango native Francisco Montoya de la Cruz, and repeating certain discourses in the contemporary manner of Odd Nerdrum, who held great weight in my vision during those years.

The technical execution attempted to empirically imitate various resources in its realistic images, whose brushstrokes and varied accidents were expressed through textures and diluted or glazed effects.

We will find references to the Italian painters of the Quattrocento, as well as certain similarities with Spanish Baroque painters and mixtures of illustrative effects with a syncretism that attempted to turn archaic pictorial effects into a modern visual reinterpretation, alongside Giorgio de Chirico and the previously mentioned Odd Nerdrum, who has served very importantly to recontextualize my evolutionary processes.

"The flying chair," finally, and in my judgment, is the painting that best expresses the narrative language and technical construction attempted in the paintings of this collection inspired by "surrealism."

Moreover, it represents a starting point in this series along with the painting “La espina” (The thorn, 2002), whose characteristics and objectives are quite similar.

The execution of this painting and its reinterpretation under the influence of “magical realism” allowed me to grant due importance to another fundamental piece in my work for locating and developing the other elements, such as participating characters and objects; that primordial part is “the landscape.”

Unlike the previously executed painting “Looking south” (2000), which presents an infinite atmosphere with clouds serving as a backdrop to the group of figures. In the landscape of “The flying chair,” its nature seeks to propose a new design that aesthetically investigates its capacity to become an independent living being within that strange visual narrative.

The “surrealist” theme of this work needed to reflect in its entirety the sensation of standing before the context of a subjective reality full of mysterious “entities” and independent corners in that ecosystem.

Designs with purposely artificial shapes are created to visually alter the physical aspect of the elements.

Primarily, this experimentation takes place in the cluster of clouds, fundamental pieces that serve to pose the concept of “transfiguration”—a symbolic representation granting them the capacity to transform into animated, living “entities” of that tale.

Each zone of the surface integrates harmoniously without stealing the spotlight from the elements present, hinting at their possible stories through technical resources described across a distant horizon.

Among the characters, we find three groups with specific protagonistic functions in the script, justifying their presence consistently within a well-described chronicle without excesses or deficiencies, endowing this painting with the capacity to be a benchmark for my future proposals.

For me, this is a work that is “simply well-told”—diverse stories within others. The presence of a vast content of elements without stealing the spotlight, while simultaneously granting it to its main figure, signaled through a clear and precise composition that seems to have everything in its proper place.

“The flying chair” (2002) is a fine descriptive example of my “prose” or particular way of recounting things through simple storylines described naturally.

That necessity is very well represented in this painting, narrated like a short story or novella that mixes real experiences with fantastical fictions where several characters participate.

We will find individuals with characteristics suggesting the mythical rite of the “Voladores de Papantla,” but only as a metaphorical reference symbolizing the existence of “a frustrated purpose.”

The false illusion of flying with feet tied to a rope, or the deception of soaring through the skies mounted on our chair secured with chains.

Another pair of figures, childlike and unkempt in appearance, represent the genuine capacity to be able to believe in everything and at the same time in nothing, as if they were children testifying to an unusual event and no one believes them, even if it is the truth.

These faithful ragged companions, opposites to one another, show their uprootedness and search for better clothes.

One with the hat of incredulous reason, the other bareheaded full of complete certainty, but both being bearers of my first identity where so many things originated.

And as the central part, we find the presence of the “self-portrait,” a recurrent genre in several of my paintings made during those years to further reaffirm my potential characteristics amidst the transformational changes in my new path.

By portraying yourself, you become the voice of your concepts without intermediaries; you want to be the direct testimony of your own feelings about being and existing.

More than an act of protagonism, it is a declaration of principles processed over many years that you decided to communicate with wordless images—the autobiographical experience of your own catharsis.

Just as happens with other significant objects in my dreamlike and symbolic works, this painting features an element of vital importance and prominence that will serve as a general link between all components, besides being the foundation that will title and define the personality of the work.

For the first time in my painting appears the “symbol” of a “chair,” which will signify the “comfort zone” where one finds the security and trust to feel protected.

The chair will represent taking oneself wherever one goes, a kind of portable home where I can take refuge.

Undoubtedly, all the houses we have inhabited or where we were given shelter will always signify the immune protection of the return, where we can be and behave as ourselves.

As an anecdotal precedent, in my grandmother Teresa's house, one of the options to sit and partake in the gathering if someone had been left standing was a "small chair," as a last resort.

Its obvious proportions for a child always seemed to me the best excuse so that an unexpected visitor at a gathering would not stay very long.

However, for me, being small in those years, the dimensions of that piece of furniture suiting my size made me experience, on the contrary, the sensation of being the center of attention, even surrounded by adults discussing things I wouldn't understand until many years later.

Sometimes in our subconscious, memories of the past mix, seeming incoherent until years pass and you find an explanation for them.

I don't know why in many small fast-food joints they painted the chairs in that blue color, so ugly yet so endearing, that inexplicably made you feel a part of that place.

It is incredible the capacity that can be bestowed upon an object when it is given a meaning that manages to transcend further—a talisman to be able to fly.

In all this description regarding the construction details surrounding the painting "The flying chair” (2002), there existed another great reference, very important and fundamental for communicating my fantastical or extraordinary ideas within a normal coexistence with the characters, without questioning the strange events in an objective and everyday manner.

I found that reference particularly in the literary work classified as “magical realism" by Juan Rulfo (1917-1986), with his first published book El llano en llamas (The Burning Plain), a collection of short

stories narrated with the popular language of the characters amidst hopeless and inhospitable environments surrounding the Mexican Revolution.

Just like this book made up of several stories, my intention was to present a compilation of various stories illustrated in paintings as a re-signified register of symbols, dream interpretations, and self-discovery with my own mysterious universes of the unconscious.

The list of these tales attempting to follow the guidelines described above began with the painting "La espina" (The thorn), followed by "The flying chair" and then "Sueño de una ballena" (Dream of a whale). All created in 2002 alongside others with equal allegorical expressions.

"I dreamed I was jumping, I dreamed I was flying, and I dreamed I was crossing…"

Using the subjective language that can do anything was the best way I found to describe that frustrated yearning of my father as the "unfortunate mojado" who finds the solution to redeem himself through a fantastical resource that grants him immunity on his journey.

"To fly by on a chair across the border that rejected us all…"

Taking advantage of this central character as an anecdotal carrier, there is also a slight, anonymous detail regarding the removal of a long and abundant head of hair kept for several years, due to the uncertainty of having to cut it radically, even if it is highly necessary and liberating.

My own figure aims to reproduce a stereotyped representation of someone who takes off his clothes so as not to get them wet while crossing that border, in a precautionary act.

This character, in my opinion, is one of the best examples in my entire pictorial production, managing to express—with just the genuine gesture of "hugging himself"—a complete synthesis of the complex dilemma of migration, amidst the dramas of exile and the conflicts of gaining acceptance.

"The dilemma of leaving everything without the certainty that you will be accepted…"

That whole territory functions as a dream narrator that illustrates the metaphors of those elements and characters full of magical attributes to transform that objective and ordinary reality into a place where clouds have the consciousness to distribute a rain full of uncertain omens.

The lights and shadows cast on the rocky landscape and the enveloping water aim to place us in some lost place on a geographic border that, if you manage to cross it, you can turn your yearned-for desires into possibilities.

The visual composition of the scene is presented in an orderly manner through a sequence of planes.

The journey begins with the figure mounted on the chair, which will serve to identify and empathize with it. Furthermore, the fantastical nature of the work is subtly posed through an optical visual effect, with the strange sensation caused by not being sure if that stool is resting on the rock or, conversely, floating lightly in the air.

Like in a landscape film frame, the characters gradually show their degree of involvement with the protagonist as they move away from the foreground.

Each stage gradually shows us symbolic references about the general plot to situate us in the drama of the "undocumented."

This painting achieves the balance between a setting full of folkloric references, participative personality behaviors, and the proposal of turning a tale into a scene of magical reality.

The spectator observes from the country of origin how all their hopes, placed in that individual who perhaps tells us something about ourselves, rise up flying.

"To step into the waters without knowing how to swim, to go further to where the horizon is seen…"

Two children accompany him as a representation of his own conscience, just like the other four characters who serve to bid him farewell and receive him further on.

Dressed in ceremonial raincoats, they will perform their own archaic ritual of the flight that connects past, present, and future—as if they were a row of poles carrying the wires of tomorrow, or serving as pillars of a bridge so that no one ever has to get wet again.

–**Edgar Mendoza**

Edgar Mendoza

Dreaming of dogs



Dreaming of dogs, 2000, Oil on canvas, 110 x 90 cm © Edgar Mendoza

Dreaming of dogs

2000, Oil on canvas, 110 x 90 cm

Something about Realism and Abstraction

With this painting, executed at the close of the 20th century and following a 10-year journey as a painter, a different way of working was about to be reaffirmed in my process and body of work. This contrasted with my past pictorial concerns experienced during the previous decade between 1989 and 1999, and it would result in a new series of paintings starting in 2000 that would begin to build the foundations of a more solid style in my pursuit of figuration and reality.

In this discovery toward a new stage, I decided with this painting to stop using certain technical abstract effects that were combined with realistic human figures. These alluded to a postmodern figuration that was booming in those years, but with which I did not feel fully identified.

However, my incursion into and practice within the realms of abstraction between 1993 and 1994 provided me with recurrent amorphous plastic structures that refused to disappear entirely from my work, despite my strong academic preference since my beginnings for the literal representation of the human figure and its realistic circumstances.

I would find a great intermediate influence between the mixture of figuration and abstraction in the early 20th-century work of the symbolist and modernist Gustav Klimt. His work would spark in my painting the creation of characters alongside abstract forms, which also derived into the creation of an extra series I titled “Postestertorismo” (Post-stertorism)—a dimensional and bio-abstract proposal with a conceptual purpose regarding symbolic existence and the spectrum between life and death.

Through abstraction, we extract the entire summary of an object's physical characteristics and use them to make a global synthesis, creating a concept that defines its essence. We turn the objective into the subjective. Abstraction represents ideas that remind us of realities translated into forms, colors, and textures—in the case of painting in this genre—even if they do not resemble anything figurative.

Abstraction will always be a living part of my work due to its latent manifestation in the different compositional structures of my pieces, but primarily through its foundations and characteristics, with which I will continue the search for a contemporary realism that simplifies my own universe and paints only what is necessary.

Identity

“Pictorial identity” is subject to the changes our work undergoes as we mature as artists. With every movement we make in that process, the structures we paint can be transformed or reaffirmed so that they reflect the meaning and purpose we need to express in proposals that show how we observe and feel the world around us.

Our working methods and the techniques we employ are built thanks to that “identity,” which indicates the manner we need to describe a direct and objective language, or a subjectivity that goes further through complex description.

Metaphorically, at the beginnings of every artist, we will find tables full of inspiring possibilities that we would like to copy because they were masterfully executed. But in the process of each painter, according to their abilities and individual search for this "pictorial identity," only through a long process of years will we choose what connects us with our truth and tells us when it is time to make decisions to move on to the next stage.

This topic is of utmost importance to establish a record of why we modify the styles we venture into. We do not usually remove or add things out of mere caprice; rather, behind every change lies profound reflection that gives meaning to what we do and allows it to grow coherently as we continue experiencing life.

The change

With figuration and reality adopted more solidly in the year 2000, it was not that I intended to displace my natural need for abstraction, but my representations needed to start not only capturing the mere appearance of the object. Beyond reproducing that explicit realism, my figures demanded to be given a rationale... even to have a narrative of the event, about what they were or what they meant to say.

Therefore, my paintings acquired the need to tell stories with a language that could not be interrupted by allusions to other styles or artistic movements that would distract from the narrative purpose.

Realism

“Dreaming of Dogs” (Sueño con perros) and “Looking South” (Mirando al sur), both created in 2000, are perhaps my paintings most closely related to 19th-century “Realism.” This movement was based on the detailed reproduction of the reality prevailing in that era's social environment, amidst its contrasts in social classes, scientific advances, and everyday depictions featuring ordinary people based on real individuals.

Realism sought the absolute objectivity of things, and my concerns aligned precisely with those characteristics in my quest to uniquely capture the designs that had been evolving during my first ten years as a painter.

Starting point

For figurative realist artists, our technical and conceptual progress and growth function differently from the references that other styles considered modern or contemporary might have. Among us who create realism, there is a temporal lag that differentiates us from them and is interesting to take into account.

In our world, figuration and its cognitive language are the “primary source” of knowledge that allows those of us orbiting realism to learn and transmit a large part of our vocabulary translated into images.

Primarily, it is through this language that we mature, appreciating the influences we draw from the work done by similar artists across all eras.

Therefore, we are a community whose rules and interests operate differently from those of other styles—rules that can only awaken in us the need to observe that reality as our principal and only means of expression.

The visual dictionary for representing reality has long centuries of codified experience, and that wisdom has been available for hundreds of years to kindred artists who, generation after generation, join its ranks in search of new inquiries that serve the reflection of the realist system.

The advances and progress experienced in this style are curiously generated thanks to a “temporal shift,” given that the decisions made to grow as a figurative and realist artist are based on the records of other eras, with an immense amount of examples from various periods serving as a living reference that is regenerated and resumed.

Our nature lives and endures between archaic knowledge and contemporary contributions that come together as a whole in a single common trunk, which is “reality,” without denying it, as it is the source that feeds our deep love for this art.

To paint reality and give it a personality, we consult the ancient and modern masters; we use the greatest technological advancements in imaging and design as tools, and we synthesize an entire visual technology of each lived era onto a single canvas that can express concepts that go beyond, just as happens with “abstraction”... is this survival not contemporary?

We grow with records from other times, continuing to look at everything as if it were the first time we painted that face being born, dying, and being born again... like vampires in time, and no one else does that.

Portraits

Of course, we can always reflect on other movements and be influenced by them because knowledge requires everything that forces it to question its own creation.

Reality had been confirmed in my artistic approach, and I needed to build something coherent, first and foremost, with my redefined identity—for example, the expressive group with which it could be identified.

In the 1990s, at the end of the 20th century, postmodernity would continue to reign as a latent movement up to the present day since its break with modernity.

When I started painting in 1989, the global art scene was divided between the “grunge” style with its dirty, messy aesthetic, and a boom in installations, performance, and video art. All these proposals held a marked rejection of any well-constructed figuration, except for “the ghetto”—to call it somehow—of realist painting done in that decade.

Among the great painters who were still actively producing painting during those years and who would leave a mark on my work through books and magazines were basically: Odd Nerdrum, Manuel Franquelo, Golucho, Gottfried Helnwein, Arturo Rivera, Rafael Cauduro, and Claudio Bravo.

Definitely, this entire ecosystem of artistic possibilities around me, combined with my own circumstances amidst a plastic search that began in Durango in 1989, continued experiencing great changes in Mexico City around 1994, dared a great leap to Spain in 1997, and ended the century reuniting with Mexico again in an adventure that finally knocked on the doors of a pictorial style that did not care about seeming anachronistic or retrograde.

“Realism” itself already had its starting point, and of course, throughout those 10 itinerant years full of experiences, my concern about my “own identity,” which demanded narrative paintings in its own unadorned language, was always present.

If we do not know who we are, we cannot offer our own version of what we want to express.

The human figure would be confirmed as the vital center of my compositions. The choice of a model who could express that path about “identity” I found in the depiction of myself as the spokesperson for my own story, defining me before others.

Now it was not just about making a “portrait,” a genre I had practiced as commercial work since my beginnings as a painter, but one that deserves complete analysis due to its vast importance within realism as a category and its extreme technical and conceptual difficulty.

To paint someone's portrait is to paint an self-portrait of oneself. To paint a self-portrait is an x-ray containing truths inside the pockets of a disguise that sometimes one does not even know one is wearing.

Self-portraits are existential testimonies of the “I” that needs to express its own circumstances at specific moments through the protagonist who wants to testify to the veracity of that story: “He wanted to tell us that this disturbed him and was happening to him.”

It is important to distinguish the purposes and foundations regarding the personality of the portrait or self-portrait because analyzing them allows us to differentiate how and why the character wants to

show themselves as part of that story, as well as the experiential reflections the painter themselves is undergoing when executing said painting.

In 1999, I began to more consciously use the representation of a formula that I continue to repeat in my most recent paintings to this day—a basic technique used for centuries in compositions to tell the figurative stories of all eras.

Just as happens in a theatrical staging, the system consists of presenting a primary character as the center of the story—in this case, the self-portrait—accompanied by a specific environment that gives character to the scene, in which other secondary characters or symbols participate to reinforce the meaning of what is happening.

Every compositional structure, the number of characters, wardrobe, furniture, lighting, coloring, open or closed spaces, and the description of details according to the importance of their scenic position must be balanced. This order must not be altered so as not to distort the sense of the narrative, allowing it to function without interference in the balance and meaning of what is presented... and that is very difficult to achieve.

Dogs

In “Dreaming of Dogs,” rather than the character taking center stage, the intention is for him to cease being a specific identity, as happens in a specific portrait, and to become the symbol of a generalized character.

Characters, by not having an identity of being someone in particular, become models representing open figures and stereotypes that can narrate stories without being cataloged as a single individual.

In 1999, the narrative about my accumulated identity indeed wanted to show itself as a self-portrait, being the first voice that signified being myself as the symbol of my own pictorial epic—an epic surrounded by stalking dogs representing the uncertain future that provokes fears and hopes.

Without yet knowing it, years later would come other new paintings with a surrealist tendency that yearned for the unique language of magical realism, followed by the latest change so far, featuring a hyper-realist language that continues to observe concepts differently.

How many social, cultural, historical, and personal circumstances lie behind the creation of a single painting like “Dreaming of Dogs”?

Between 1989 and 1999, my figurative work was nourished not only by great and diverse figures of the visual arts; additionally, in my generation, the vision of reality was modified by the magnificent aesthetics of cinema, amid its novel technical advances and the discovery of films from all eras and their profound reflections on existence, fantasy, or the daily mirror of life.

Identity is due not only to what inspires us socioculturally during our formative stages in each phase of growth; the traits that also define us are the experiences lived throughout our entire lives, which have nothing to do with art but are inherent to it.

My parents forbade us from having animals after the death of Jet, a small mixed-breed dog, faithful to the home, whom my mother decided to adopt when she bought her house with such effort back in 1965 in the city of Durango. The little animal simply decided not to leave with his former owners and remained in the house as part of the purchase. When the dog was dying, he asked my mother to open the door and went to lie down at the end of the sidewalk, never to return, as if not wanting to be a bother.

As a child, I feared the dogs that abounded everywhere—dogs lying in the doorways of open homes with indifferent neighbors; dogs barking like choirs amidst the bells announcing the passing hours; dogs infected with rabies when summers arrived, and others soaking wet wandering among the puddles of May downpours; dogs faithful to flea-ridden beggars, and dogs running happily in their dog lives, only to be found later devoid of that life, their little eyes opaque and dull among the bushes in some street corner.

Tarzán followed me one day as if asking me to adopt him when I was leaving “La Habana,” an old cantina from my early days; the extremely skinny dog stared at me with the eyes of a hero from “Editorial Novaro” comics.

Against my parents' nature, the animal stayed at home, more loyal than any other in the neighborhood. As soon as Tarzán gained weight, he turned out to be a true pit bull terrier, abandoned for reasons only God knows before he crossed my path.

His brindle coat and slender but armored figure one day inevitably attracted the stares that would snatch away his new life of peace, and my submissive personality handed him over to the butchers amidst bets and fights.

“Los chidos” (The cool ones)—that's what they called us. We fought dogs in savage confrontations where the people were the animals and the animals were the best version of human beings, unable to exercise their rights. The smell that emanated was the unforgettable horror of a sin from whose penance I might one day be freed, as I perceive the eyes of my new dogs asking only that I never betray their trust again.

With all that abuse stored in my conscience, perhaps “Lupe,” who has reached her final stage after accompanying me for 15 years, can be the intermediary. With her testimony of her life with me, perhaps she can defend my guilt before the dogs of the past, so they may forgive me.

Tarzán managed to get away. He died of old age but could have lived even longer; he went crazy and aggressively chased cattle after being taken to the countryside. His fights were memorable, and he survived not because of the pardon of those of us who abused him, but rather—and I like to think this—it was to tell me that I too should leave that environment of violence... and run away from there without giving up on myself, even if I went crazy like him along the way.

I find one of my favorite attractions in cinema and its countless ways of narrating. Upon my first return from Spain in 1998, life in Mexico City, besides the transformation heralded in my work, brought the most important romantic relationship I have ever had, with Pilar. Together we discovered that postmodern world amid things Spanish but above all amid things Mexican, where we lived its colossal culture and the idiosyncrasy of an authentically artistic people.

My past experiences described above identified somehow with a series of films centering around certain cited figures and models, which undoubtedly coincided in their symbolism with my own realities—both in Mexico throughout my adolescence and in Spain, with testimonies from my own friends who were authentic “quinquis” (delinquents), survivors of the 80s amid heroin and the AIDS plague.

The central theme of Spanish “quinqui” cinema refers to a marginalized social group in Spain, depicting young delinquents from working-class neighborhoods in the 70s and 80s. It represents poverty, social exclusion, and urban marginality with very particular lifestyles and aesthetics. “Perros

callejeros" (Street Dogs, 1977) by José Antonio de la Loma is the most representative film of this genre. Meanwhile, in Mexico, we had a quite related trilogy a year later starring Valentín Trujillo, "Perro callejero" (1978) by Gilberto Gazcón. And of course, not forgetting "Amores perros" (2000) by Alejandro González Iñárritu and Guillermo Arriaga, where those fights made me recall that dirty little world of my early youth, a lamentable reality in which hundreds of animals are still abused and sacrificed.

"What better possibility of communicating than through the body."

–Joseph Beuys

One morning I woke up from a bad dream, one of those nightmares that describe your inner mysteries so realistically that they end up resolving anxieties much better than a psychoanalyst ever could.

When you wake up abruptly, the details you remember from that reverie gradually fade until they disappear, but that scene remained to inspire the painting "Dreaming of Dogs" from the year 2000.

Around this work, reflections on my identity with a past and a present had been brewing, which could generate ideas to speak of a series of anecdotes full of meanings.

Various attempts were made, as well as subsequent works using the figure of the dog. Beyond the experiences described above, the figure of a "symbol" was successfully abstracted through this animal.

The more we have experienced firsthand what drives us to generate a symbol, the more authentic its reinterpretation and transmission will be... a symbol can have a general appearance and meaning for everyone, but if we have truly lived it, we redefine its feeling as a personal and unique transformation.

The aim was to transmit that anecdotal scene from my dream through a "self-portrait" that could also simulate certain characteristics of an "ex-voto" (a type of miraculous petition retablo offering present in Mexican churches since the viceroyalty).

That recurring frustration where you feel guilty, but whose meaning goes even further than a specific anxiety and encompasses everything that forces us to survive throughout our lives so we can overcome our fears.

Staying petrified doing nothing, or trying to fight even when we have no other option, generates states in which you discover that you are completely alone in the face of danger. Perhaps the only solution is the subjectivity that goes far beyond, over our heads.

The search to find designs that best express what one wants to convey requires years of practice and trials. Generally, changes and modifications occur in the transitional growth toward a new stage, yielding representative pieces—as is the case with “Dreaming of Dogs”—with different characteristics from our previous production.

Defining a “narrative” purpose for my work as one of its main foundations, alongside that new reality I wanted to show, demanded a more sophisticated approach. This required the recreation of more controlled photographic sessions to copy and simulate a technique with greater veracity to the event.

The session rigorously included shots from different angles of the character, as I had done previously in portraits, sculpture, and modeling—which I practiced for years in my frustrated desire to be a sculptor, and which required various more specific data points to reproduce three-dimensionality.

I dedicated myself to photographing street dogs that could convey the sensation of an untamed pack as a threat. I planned a simple structure, like a wooden platform, reflecting the absurd, hesitant, and null protection chosen to save oneself from those animals—an act similar to covering ourselves with a blanket to feel a bit safer from the dark.

The importance of the landscape over its infinites also came into play, as well as the perspective point to give the viewer an aerial view that balanced each element without unjustified interferences.

A subtle light was needed to gradually illuminate the scene, revealing the dogs' panting and the anxiety of that protagonist surrounded by the atmospheric air. The stage is viewed from above, highlighting the main figure thanks to the brightest point on his back, which in its curvature refers as much to bearing a heavy burden as it does to the fetal position with which he protects himself.

That man is protecting himself from the obvious threat of the dogs and tries to take refuge in that desolate alternative, climbing toward an ethereal plea as a last resort, like a lighthouse that changes its purpose from guiding to asking for help in the middle of the storm.

Dogs' auditory range allows them to hear frequencies inaudible to human beings; those sounds are real to them and nonexistent to us, even though we know they exist.

The dog signifies the perception of intangible natures, of the anguishes we feel without being able to explain them. They are ancient companions in that trance, or they can be the lurking bite when we do not see them on a dark night.

The painting “Dreaming of Dogs” begins to show another fundamental expressive characteristic in my production: the recreation of events that occur “in situ” without anyone being present, except for that scene offered to the viewer as if they were the sole witness to that event.

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound…?

Does a landscape exist in the absence of an observer?

This resource in my way of narrating will begin to be reproduced in practically most of my paintings over the following years, exploring the difference between objective physical reality and how the subjective is perceived when shown in a painting—whose reality is merely a moment occurring somewhere in that imaginary universe.

Jointly, we will find similar characteristics in other works around this period that tell their story through self-portraiture and the compositional manner used to express their scenarios and resources of color or lighting: “Personalidades múltiples” (Multiple Personalities, 2000), “Mirando al sur” (Looking South, 2000), “El malabarista” (The Juggler, 2001), “La espina” (The Thorn, 2002), “La silla voladora” (The Flying Chair, 2002), “Estación 14” (Station 14, 2003), and “Retales de una costilla rota” (Scraps of a Broken Rib, 2004).

One makes exist what no one sees.
Images describing metaphors of forgotten events in some place no one knows.
Looking at those paths with woodlands swayed by the afternoon wind that no one contemplates either.
Only I, like a ghost, unable to accurately describe that freezing wind that hurts the face as if it were alive.
Painting invented testimonies and unearthing the bones of disappeared beings

–**Edgar Mendoza**

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