

PERMALANDSCAPE

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Light and terrain, the background and the form of the landscape in Majorca are the starting point from where we can begin to understand the cultural construction of the place we find ourselves in. The heart of Es Baluard is nourished by the landscape, by the context it is set in and to which it belongs, and from that which resurfaces from the retina of those who are attuned to the terrain of the island, its real spaces and those that are created from fiction. "There is a third possible attitude towards living things, and that is perhaps the most important mental process in Art: it is that movement of the sympathies, where the spectator loses their own identity and unites with the "observed" and finally with the Great Spirit of the Universe, that shapes everything that has life. Our poets can speak about Nature; our artists act with it"ⁱ. Ultimately, the landscape allows us to understand ourselves and to understand that there was a moment when Nature, already claimed by philosophers and poets such as Lucretius, Pliny and Aristoteles, Theocritus, Ovid and Virgil, came to the fore and became the protagonist, being activated by each new interlocutor that interpreted it.

The landscape as an element of aesthetic appreciation was invented, so to speak, by Xie Lingyun (385-433), the first landscape artist recognised as such. It is highly revealing that in Chinese the term landscape is written with two ideographic characters: *shanshui* which corresponds to "mountain" (*shan*) and "water" (*shui*), solid elements in the universe; the mountain as a bridge between the divine and the earthly, a shelter for hermits, and water flowing like the lifeblood that feeds the *Tao*, symbol of metamorphosis and that which is mutable.

The landscape genre practised by many noteworthy outsiders and home-grown artists is one of the intrinsic characteristics of the history of art of the Balearic Islands and place Mallorca in a privileged position for understanding modernity.

In the West, the notion of landscape did not emerge until the Renaissance, and a letter from Petrarch, written in 1336 at the foot of Mont Ventoux, is the first document that almost all the histories of landscape refer to as a basis for understanding the meaning of the term.

Although there are some who doubt that Petrarch would have climbed the mountain, this text, written in the form of a letter, began by noting: "For no other reason than wanting to contemplate the impressive height of the place, I have today climbed the highest mountain in the region, that is called,

unjustifiably, Windy”ⁱⁱ. The aesthetic view from the location as an act of dilettante contemplation and its reflection as a personal interiorisation came to manifest itself later when he announced: “Sated and happy to have viewed the mountain, I turned the eyes of my soul towards myself”ⁱⁱⁱ.

The landscape genre acquired a presence in the West after the Italian Renaissance and especially during the *Quattrocento* with Giotto, Duccio and Leonardo da Vinci. They began to introduce in their pictures elements of proximity that anyone could identify with as everyday and belonging to their outdoor surroundings. It was then that the autonomy of genres was developed, from still-life to history painting and self-portraits. With the Dutch boom and circumstances linked to the dominance of Catholicism, landscape painting took its time to reach the Spanish state and spread as a practice. Romantic landscapers dedicated to the high mountain as the paradigm of grandeur and mystery, as well to dying sunsets, harbingers of dreams and adventures, would apply their poetic codes to any setting capable of being made sublime. Later, this would be a recurrent theme by realist painters who opted for landscapes as a reflection of that which was tangibly real and a prelude to future tourist exports.

With the irruption of Impressionism, the predisposition to the open air, *Plein air*, was exacerbated, with the aim of capturing every fragment of the natural surroundings and sublimating it. Now colours were no longer mixed on the palette, but rather in a more precise way directly on the canvass. The deconstructed landscape was recomposed once again on the retina of each spectator. As a result of its international dissemination, the Impressionism practised in the Balearic environment exalted the light and tones that these bestowed on a terrain that naturally favoured the colours and shapes that were engraved in pre-Avant-garde ideals.

Major monographs and anthological exhibitions have already presented the work of the genealogy of artists interested in the coast of Majorca, from Joan O’Neille, precursor of the purest landscape, to Anglada-Camarasa, dedicated to intense colours since 1909, or the legendary Pollença School of Painting up to Joan Miró, who was already painting on the island when he visited his maternal grandparents in 1906.

They all renewed the past and recycled it looking towards the future. In each of them, regardless of the desire to reflect corporeal or reconstructive situations, to sublimate nature, to keep it in its ordinariness or to make it abstract, as well as the desire to capture the atmosphere, there also became the need to, consciously or unconsciously, harmoniously control the ordering of elements and the background and foreground from the edges of the painting; that is, the geometric perspective and the aerial perspective.

Horizons, sinewy or abrupt mountains, solitary pines and stars, undulating bays and open gardens return to our imagination and are exposed (to expose is to be exposed) to continuous reflection and interpretation.

*Text included in the publication: *La Costa de Mallorca, interpretada pels nostres il·lustradors* published by Clúster and Còmic i Nous Media de Mallorca , 2016, pp.11-17.

ⁱ Chiang Lee. *The chinese Eye. An interpretation of Chinese Painting*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1961, 4a ed. (1a ed. November 1935), p. 105.

ⁱⁱ *Petrarca. Obras I. prosa*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1978, p. 255.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, p. 266.