

PABLO FLAISZMAN

*by Patricia Avena Navarro*

A print is a drawing, and that is perhaps the most important thing about it; yet it is a drawing in which technique plays a leading role. The technique used in printmaking is laborious and complex, and its end result is always enveloped in mystery and unpredictability.

Each artist takes ownership of a technique that serves him/her to best express his/her artistic and emotional capacity, and this creative process is very special. Flaiszman is an artist when he conceives and pursues the desired image, and he is an artisan when he sets out to create it, considering the different acids and the adequate time of the *biting* process, the application of ink to the plate, the moistening and proper drying of the paper. But the fascination of a print resides precisely in this whole process, which couples technique and creativity.

To visit an exhibition of the works of Pablo Flaiszman, where besides appreciating his art the viewer may gain an insight on the artist's creative process and even on his personality, is a rewarding experience. Such is the case of the exhibition "Le regard nu, dessins et gravures" (The naked gaze, drawings and prints), presented at the Galerie Argentine – Argentine Embassy – in Paris.

Flaiszman's work, whether we refer to his prints or his drawings, is characterized by the fact that the gaze is drawn towards the density of the lines and the harmony of the nuances that the author displays. Since the early years of his artistic formation, drawing has been the fundamental element in his search and his main medium of expression, the basis for the construction of his whole body of work, in which the sheet of Ingres paper has become his mental space, his image and his form. Drawing is for Flaiszman the simple and direct discipline in which he finds the freedom to exist and to express himself. Without resorting to sketches, engaging in freehand drawing, he seeks to detach himself from the picture without going beyond the boundaries of the page; he pursues depth without any

perspective; he seeks the light using black ink. Whether represented as a simple sketch or more elaborately, he emphasizes through a voluntary simplification the substantial aspect of his work; in this way, it will be a story, a narrative in action.

Viewing these remarkable etchings leads to pausing attentively before the images that appear to be uncertain and unfinished: incomplete bodies, non-defined features, unmarked edges that distill a remarkable pictorial ambition and convey the pleasure their author derives from the craft. The virtuosity with which the artist plays, depending on the genres – portraits or nudes – with a drawing that may sometimes be refined and sometimes brutal and decisive is amazing. Freed from superfluous motifs, the portraits disappear as if absorbed by an abstract weft, to the point that the image almost fades away, dissolved by the nuances of blacks and grays, and the nudes, built up in fluid glazes, filter onto the surface and flow upon it. The line, however, is always a sensible, living line close to its subject; it reaches the limit of abstraction.

Flaiszman's characters feel they are being observed, drawn, loved by the artist. Subjected to different nuances, some of them appear as a sort of symbiosis in which the shape is blurred and the features are concealed; they seem to cut through the paper; they seem to emerge from the background to go back to it. A great shadow theater where the gaze plays a leading role and each portrait records its own distinguishing marks. Thus, a figure-background relationship that confers to these works a vague timelessness is established.

The gaze is the decisive factor in the series of portraits presented. But Flaiszman transcends the immediacy of the body and delves into the spirit of the characters; he condenses in an elementary, poetic and radical way a feeling and a *raison d'être*. Depicting isolated figures or family groups, he pushes etching and drawing to their very limits and elaborates them to exhaustion.

His work is a constant experimentation. The plate through which he conveys his feelings and his perception of the world becomes an aesthetic laboratory in his hands. In the

apparently continuous surface of the plate countless surfaces appear, each of them endowed with autonomy. One might think the space has a hundred different dimensions that interrelate, communicate with and isolate one another. The innumerable relationships between the prints and the drawings of nude bodies are clearly evidenced in the exhibition, making the understanding and perception of each work pass through to the next, which results in a powerful seduction.

Obsessed with the capture of the gaze, Pablo Flaiszman has achieved the most difficult feat: to delve into the psychology of his characters, potentiating the meaning of some eyes, the gesture of some hands, thus going beyond a routine realism to reach other artistic proposals: hence the unreality that is not sublimation or idealization, but the presence of the intangible. His portraits offer a different aesthetics of the image in which the intimate opens up to infinite formal possibilities. And this is what is important, for up to this point his personal search does not seem to have been restricted by any strange factor in the quest of translating a personal world into images.