



Exhibition: **Victoria Civera. Slanting dreams**

IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern
February 3rd – April 17th 2011

Curator: Kevin Power

This exhibition is not so much a mid-career coverage of Vicky Civera's work over the last twenty years but it is rather a celebratory focusing on major aspects and key incidentals of her work. It picks up the precisions that seem unconsciously and undogmatically to characterize its essence: a deceptive lightness, a sly sexuality, an obsessive referencing of a self-absorbed family network, a constant circling around the presence of the fetish, a fecund painterly competence, a fluid surging lyricism, a deliberately cultivated hermeticism, and a bizarre and fragile psychology along with a deeply rooted inner strength. At a certain level the show is the sum of her life. It is deft, humorous, light in touch, and self-protectively twisted. Vicky talks a lot to herself: creative chatter!

Civera moves the world back into her shell, absorbs what attracts her and sends everything back, reread, modified, digested, mulled, and changed. I've known her for so many years that I guess I can say these things, perhaps sometimes being right and perhaps sometimes being wrong. As far as I am concerned the brute diamond at the centre of her world is the feminine: vulnerable, reserved, intimate, hidden and given.

Feminine not feminist but like the latter I suspect that she also slips between Freud and Marx. She knows that feminist politics redressed the image, set Freud as a reading and not as a truth, and she also knows that in a global world the spheres of the social and the economic are problematically reasserting themselves. Advanced capitalism lives in a spectacular world, Civera knows this and her change of scale may even owe something to it. Yet, always, she hurries back into her self, as the only anchor she has deeply emotional and never theoretically illustrative. It is a bruised rather than a comfortable process but it has been one of constant growth. The world does not let us alone and neither does Vicky – whatever the degree of mimesis her work proposes – ask it to.

The question thus becomes where do the new circumstances of contemporary global living leave her or, perhaps more succinctly, how does she situate herself in the midst of what will not be a short-termed crisis but rather a geopolitical upheaval that will result in radical readjustments. My answer to this question – and here I keep Marx and Freud in play – would be within the critical parameters of what we might call commodity fetishism. Vicky uses, enjoys, and abuses contemporary products, catch your eye

objects picked up in the streets, cloth cuttings from a haberdashery store, industrial materials etc. Marxist fetishism is a matter of inscription, questioning how the sign of value comes to be placed on a commodity; whereas Freudian fetishism flourishes as a phantasmatic inscription, ascribing excessive value to objects considered to be valueless: high heels, belts, fashion items, small objects, jottings, closed containers.

Her world is oniric with occasional touches of the surreal; it is private, closed in on the rituals and surprises of the studio and it comes at us with a cautious smile. Her pieces live up against each other in an endless muted conversation and they ask us to be attentive, to be sensitive to detail, to the minor registers of the imagination – minor not because they are less significant but because they opt for the subtlety of understatement. Fetishisms create social and sexual constructions of things at intractable points that trouble the social or sexual psyche. Civera exploits these sensations.

The show brings together objects, installations, drawings and paintings. It shows both the range of her work and its coherence. To some extent it can be seen as a walk through a hedonistic fantasy garden inhabited by fragile, discrete, or sexually overt objects, accompanied by a series of muted secrets, leading us to an upper level where her sets of drawings serve as the corner-stones of her poetic, disturbingly personal and endlessly nuanced, lexicon. These works engage the eye but they also leave a curious after-taste: a gnawing twang.