

# *Susana Esponda's Painting* A Critical, Playful Exercise

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*Young Girl with Flowers*, 70 x 80 cm, 1994 (oil on canvas).

Susana Esponda's work invites us to call it "candid." This would be a mistake, not only because it would be simplistic, but above all because it would demonstrate our own inability to see.

Susana's handling of iconography is a process of weaving, where we see a finely honed social critique, whose visual position presents facts and situations that are apparently isolated but habitually related, scenes that we repeatedly experience, see and even criticize, but without stopping to see who the actors are, what surrounds them, whom they share their time and space with. Susana Esponda does. She examines the moment minutely, working with the patience of a surgeon or a researcher, culling through the spaces.

Curiously, her visual proposal includes the rapid intervention of the restless, seductive eye that selects the objects, the lights that make up invitations to specific periods not usually visited. But, above all, it associates longings that may or may not be close or even her own. How often could our relatives replace those of Susana Esponda? We can even envy the character, desire the sweets or simply paw at the air to frighten away the fly, to avoid the bee's sting. But finding ourselves in that little space, inside a frame, we are inhibited by the possibility of not being able to leave, of not being able to taste the *pirulí* lollipop, of getting used to the armchair's wool, to breathing the country breeze, to finally recognizing that we have already experienced that detail, that moment.

Susana Esponda has ventured into different terrains. Or, it would be better to say, she has invited us, has pointed out and questioned different terrains. The scenes journey through each and every one of our histories, noting stages that we long to have lived, but in each of them, they put forward a unique vision. The individual will turns into collective will. We ask ourselves what painting is. The answer is simple: it is a visual language

—curiously the most primitive one— that transmits emotions, experiences, sensations, criticisms, translating them through an eye that untiringly seeks someone to exchange with, an accomplice. Susana Esponda quickly finds partners —voluntary or not— in her mood; with her painting, she manages to touch common chords; she does not get lost looking for conceptual languages that require an explanation; she does not propose images that contradict each other in their surroundings; she does not challenge the viewer's knowledge; she kindly shares and communicates, establishes a dialogue fulfilling the basic commitment: in the end, she commits us with her discourse.

We can conceptually pair the visual proposal with several masters, including the biting scenes of Hieronymus Bosch who sarcastically exhibits the shame of an entire decomposed society, such as the multitudinous feasts where social decomposition is the main dish for us viewers. Susana Esponda isolates moments, freezes sensations, puts forward unwritten comments, comments that float on the air. We intuit them, or, as we say, "We have them on the tip of our tongues"; we deduce them.

She adorns the moments, dresses up atmospheres, allows us to glimpse the characters that belong to groups and who get bored because they will not take a risk. The origin of the character does not matter as much as portraying that mocking air. Susana finds an atmospheric parody with Goya and his royal portraits; she walks stylistically between royalty and mortals, between the ludicrous and the ironic, between telling the truth or only seeming to be the truth. Painting portrays what the painter sees, what he/she interprets, but mainly what he/she wants to show. Susana Esponda's characters are not real, but the scene is. The commitment is not only presented iconographically; her painting seeks clear and clean mastery; it does not seek material interruptions; it does not seek optical distractions: bread is bread, the train, a train; the message is clear; it does not try to demonstrate or seem. Susana enjoys playfully portraying everything that we never dare to criticize. **MM**

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Photos courtesy of Susana Esponda.



*Woman in a Blue Dress, 160 x 90 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).*



*Fruit Vase, 70 x 40 cm, 2003 (oil on canvas).*



*The Nun* 70 x 170 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).



*Woman with Dog*, 60 x 170 cm, 2002 (oil on canvas).

Susana walks stylistically between royalty and mortals,  
between the ludicrous and the ironic, between telling the truth  
or only seeming to be the truth.



*The Circus*, 130 x 150 cm, 1995 (oil on canvas).



*Almost a Copy of Picasso, 100 x 80 cm, 1995 (oil on canvas).*



*River Craft, 70 x 40 cm, 1995 (oil on canvas).*

We can conceptually pair the visual proposal with the biting scenes of Hieronymus Bosch, who sarcastically exhibits the shame of an entire decomposed society.



*Parlor, 40 x 70 cm, 1994 (oil on canvas).*



*Playing Tennis*, 70 x 90 cm, 1994 (oil on canvas).