

recounted marvels, so I went with him to see Mondrian...

I was making the most of the studio being so close to our living quarters, working for hours every day, but feeling free to knock off if something worth while came along. Once in a while I would pull the workbenches around, link them with planks, make the bleachers for the circus, and we would have it three nights running. Sometimes, we had nearly a hundred people. There were regular aficionados and occasionally some new people; others were bringing someone along. In the front row, there was always a place reserved for Louisa's great-aunt, Mrs. Alice Cuyler, who was quite elderly but enthusiastic...

The Nelsons in Varengeville expected a gay Calder. I arrived with a rather drawn visage and they wondered what was the matter. We were the last off the boat, due to the volume of our luggage.

The douanier said: "

Where do your things end? There?"

And I said:

"No, over there."

"There?" he said then, pointing further.

And I said:

"No, over there."

The first thing he opened was one of the valises of the circus, and he said:

"Ca, c'est du cirque."

He passed everything.

1993. 01

M.MANSILLA, ROJO, TUÑÓN.

CIRCO

CUANDO EL DEDO ROZA,
CON CIERTA FE, LO INERTE.

NOTAS SOBRE EL CIRCO DE CALDER

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La poderosa fragilidad de las figuras circenses de Calder bien pudiera evocar, con la complicidad del lector, el sucederse vertiginoso de algunas cuestiones artísticas de este siglo ya longevo y mostrarnos cuanto los atributos de las cosas son apenas fruto de nuestra mirada.

Y no sólo porque hace presente, en la penumbra, todo aquello que rodea a las estrellas, sino más bien por esa tupida trama de suspense y emoción, diversidad y temporalidad, ingenuidad y fe, esa abultada intimidad que acompaña el sendero de un tenaz esfuerzo por materializar las palabras de una época.

El circo de Calder es, quizás, el episodio de esta centuria mas cargado reflexiones sobre estructura, escultura, teatro y espectáculo, sobre el movimiento y el aire que nos rodea, pero es también, ante todo, una actitud que traza gestos y ademanes del enfrentarse al mundo con una conciencia artística moderna, exageradamente pop en su porosidad receptiva y extraordinariamente precisa en la materialización de sus percepciones.

Para el artista de hoy la razón está recluida en el proceso de expresión de la idea, pero ausente de como es percibida y

the college. I repeated my bundle of Berlin days, but Eddie protested that I arrived with nothing but a roll of wire on my shoulders and pliers in my pocket. I admit there was some truth to this, for I always traveled with a roll of wire and a pair of pliers. I took the circus along too, and showed it to the Harvard boys...

Louisa arrived at about the time Fredric Kiesler—a Viennese architect who had done a few things in Paris and then gone on to New York—was having a fling with my circus. From previous years, Kiesler knew Fernand Léger, Karl Einstein, the critic, Le Corbusier, Mondrian, and van Doesburg. He gave me a list of whom to invite for the circus, so I invited them all for the same night, at the Villa Brune. Another Einstein—from St. Louis, this one—was to be my chef d'orchestre.

I saw Kiesler before the performance, and there was great consternation in his camp because I had invited van Doesburg with the others. He apparently was a friend of Mondrian but on cool terms with Karl Einstein and maybe Léger.

That was Paris, and I never understood the battles of these coteries—and somehow or other I remained aloof from all this.

But Kiesler insisted we must head off van Doesburg at all cost, so we finally sent him a telegram, explaining that there was some error and that he could come the following day.

Kiesler and his gang came to the circus, and this time I do not remember any reaction. However, Léger was interested in what I did and we became very good friends.

The following day, van Doesburg came with his wife Petro, of whom Louisa and I later became very fond. They also brought their two little dogs—they would rush and yap at every shot of a pistol or crash of cymbals. But I got more of a reaction from Doesburg than I had from the whole gang the night before...

The St. Louis Einstein had a smattering of knowledge on all these people which he had picked up from books. The next day, he called on Mondrian by himself. He came back to Villa Brune and

Del libro "CALDER'S CIRCUS", Jean Lipman, E.P.Dutton, Nueva York, 1972.

I went to the circus, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey. I spent two full weeks there practically every day and night. I could tell by the music what act was getting on and used to rush to some vantage point. Some acts were better seen from above and others from below. At the end of these two weeks, I took a half-page layout to the Police Gazette and Robinson said, "We can't do anything with these people, the bastards never send us any tickets."...

I always loved the circus—I used to go in New York when I worked on the Police Gazette. I got a pass and went every day for two weeks, so I decided to make a circus just for the fun of it...

I started the circus for myself. An American woman, Frances Robbins, saw it, then she sent an English woman, Mary Butts, who sent Cocteau. He was excited. He started making masks out of pipe cleaners, but they were sort of soft...

Before my return to New York, in the early fall of 1927, I wanted to take my circus with me, and I had to submit the two suitcases which held the show then—it has grown to five since—to the Douane Centrale in Paris. All the artists were stamped with a rubber stamp on the buttocks. Some still carry traces of this branding...

In the spring of 1929, a photographer named Sacha Stone came to the rue Cels to see my circus. He lived in Berlin and proposed that I go there...

Somebody from Baltimore butted into my business and arranged a show in Eddie Warburg's gallery at Harvard. Warburg and Kirstein had hired a floor in an office building across the street from

necesariamente velada en su resultado. Cerca de los prestigitadores, nos sentimos atraídos por esas flores que se transforman en conejos y, acercarse al arte abstracto no es sino perder la inocencia al saber que detrás hay un truco, un sendero inaccesible, un instante incierto que apasiona al crítico y justifica su existencia. Las flores y el conejo permanecen así sin estrecharse en su inmensidad, apenas tocadas por una mano ágil, veloz, exacta, minuciosamente preparada.

Porque si algo caracteriza al arte moderno, es al extrañamiento del hombre respecto al proceso, incluso material, de como este se produce. El último resquicio de percepción directa, de explicación directa, muere con el puntillismo, y el arte se vuelve tan insondable como esas figuras que, con el principio del siglo, comienzan a volver la espalda al espectador, sin aquel generoso espejo que colocaba Velázquez.

El mensaje ya no está como antaño en el resultado, envolviendo de literatura las figuras, ni siquiera en la inquieta presencia de estados de ánimo, como en los paisajes románticos, embrión de la desnudez de palabras del arte moderno; el acento, la razón de ser, se traslada a la forma de hacer, identificándose con esta. El arte precipita así en el proceso, se hace aprehensible.

La afanosa repetición de las representaciones del circo durante cuatro décadas, cautivas de una desesperada voluntad de ver el arte como algo único y repetible, pero siempre cercano,

inauguran el catálogo del arte de acción, cuando la actitud desborda el contenido, y en la apretada síntesis de arte popular y escueta precisión constructiva se encuentran entreverados los escuálidos acróbatas, la tintineante dama del lanzador de cuchillos, el pasmoso león ajeno al público, y el embrollo de cables y telas que el maestro de ceremonias despliega ante nuestros ojos como el episodio artístico más intenso del siglo, menos necesitado de palabras para ser disfrutado: unos minutos en los que la representación se torna presencia y el arte aparece envuelto en naturalidad, en una suerte de pasión que guarda en secreto, para los aficionados, sus tesoros.

Porque lo hermoso de la obra de Calder, de esas figuras circenses tan entrañables, de un quehacer artístico tan frágil, trabajado con tesón durante toda una vida, es la extensión temporal del proceso de búsqueda de equilibrio; el móvil permanece con vida propia siempre, esperando nuestro soplo, y la consciencia de su balanceo, incluso en la lejanía, humaniza el objeto, le insufla vida nuestra voluntad cuando el dedo roza, con cierta fe, lo inerte.

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Los equilibristas del Circo de Calder.