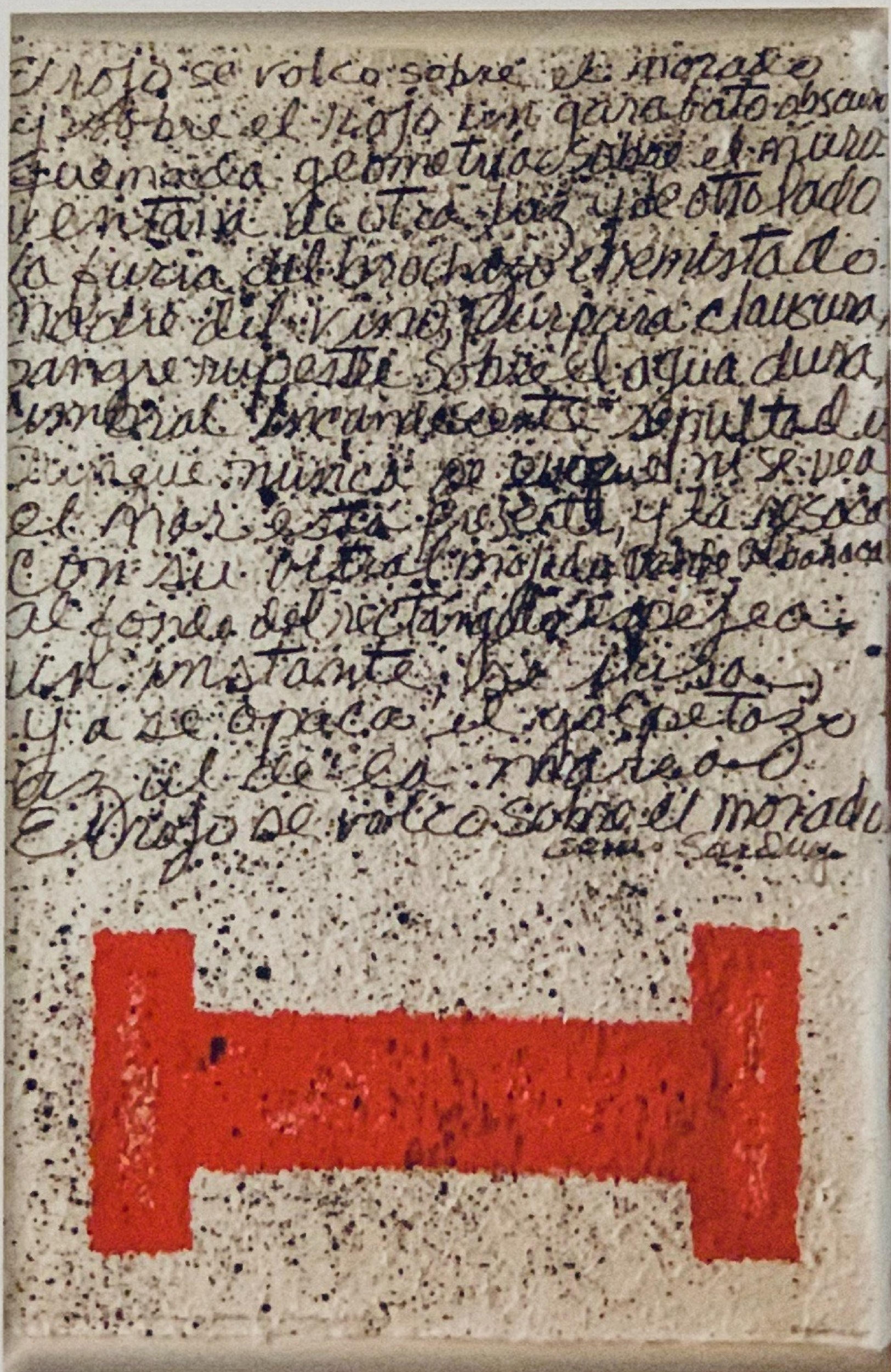


Mario Bencomo

Elegy to Poetry/ Le Cabinet de Poésie



MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Elegy to Poetry/
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A dense, abstract illustration of a forest scene. The foreground is filled with dark, gnarled trees and foliage. In the center, a small, bright orange and yellow circular light source, resembling a fire or the sun, illuminates the surrounding branches. The background is a lighter, textured area representing a sky or distant landscape.

Romances sobre papel

El reconocido pintor cubano-americano, Mario Bencomo llega esta vez con una muestra personal bastante exclusiva, conformada por un conjunto de obras que ha estado acumulando durante los últimos años. Se trata de su serie -ya antológica, pues trabaja en ella desde hace mucho tiempo- *Elegy to poetry/Le cabinet de poesie*, un definitivo work in progress, obsesión creativa que no lo abandona. Arroboado por la inaccesibilidad de la belleza y las pulsiones del deseo erótico de esencia platónica, Bencomo, concibe una obra intrincada, pero sensible, colmada de referentes que son -al mismo tiempo- guiños biográficos, metáforas de la ansiedad como castigo.

Dicha serie está integrada por piezas donde aparecen combinadas -en una fina promiscuidad- la pintura como depurado ejercicio estético y la poesía como paradigma cultural y universo simbólico, no exento de abstracciones, que le han servido al artista como alimento de su discurso íntimo y trascendental. Por un lado, tenemos sus libros, exquisitos recipientes de una esmerada labor creativa, donde confluyen fragmentos de poemas transcritos por el artista con su propia letra, y una suerte de viñetas o ilustraciones resueltas a golpe de pura mancha, emoción desbordada tras la catarsis de la lectura. Tal iniciativa nos recuerda los antiguos pergaminos, decorados con miniaturas y profusión de detalles; todo lo cual nos produce la sensación de estar ante algo sagrado, místico. Allí la comunión plástica entre pintura y caligrafía describen una selva olorosa, sorpresa para los sentidos, cosmos habitado por la maestría de alguien que conoce bien la furia del amor.

Lo que más me llama la atención de su obra, es la sensibilidad y la cultura que asoman detrás de cada línea, la ambigüedad de los enunciados que se cuidan de ser directos y apuestan por la elipsis, el denso valor espiritual y la carga emotiva que laten en la selección misma de los poemas; repertorio entrañable que define la vida del artista y sus circunstancias identitarias. De ahí que la pasión confesa por bardos como Constantino Kavafy, Federico García Lorca, Walt Whitman, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rainer María Rilke, Severo Sarduy y José Lezama Lima, nombres demasiado inquietos y viscerales, más que un merecido homenaje, constituya un ejercicio de gran coherencia, en la misma medida que resulta el papel un material frágil y estas vitrinas la prisión ideal para una obra sentimental, delicada, exquisita.

Cada pieza de esta serie es como una affaire, el relato cotidiano de un romance sublime, sugerido mediante una gramática visual que forma parte de un estilo propio, consumado. Hojas, ramas, círculos, óvalos, retoños, espirales, frenesí de conceptos encarnados. Ya el pintor rococó francés Jean-Antoine Watteau, proyectaba en sus retratos de fiestas galantes el mundo al que él mismo no tenía acceso, de modo que imaginaba escenas románticas, en las cuales nunca se atrevió a dibujar un beso. Así de melancólica es a veces la obra de Bencomo, atrevida en la sugerencia y a propósito evasiva.

Rubens Riol
Crítico de Arte



Romances on Paper


Mario Bencomo –the renowned Cuban-American painter– has this time brought a quite exclusive personal exhibit consisting of a collection of works that he has been accumulating for the last few years. It is about his series –already anthological since he has been working on it for a long time– *Elegy to Poetry / Le Cabinet de Poésie*, a definitive work-in-progress, a creative obsession that has never abandoned him. Enraptured by the inaccessibility of beauty and the impulses of desire of platonic essence, Bencomo has conceived an intricate but sensitive work, one that is full of allusions which are simultaneously biographical winks and metaphors of anxiety as punishment.

This series is comprised of pieces which show a combination –with fine promiscuity– of painting as aesthetic exercise and poetry as a cultural paradigm and symbolic universe, but not lacking abstractions, which have served the artist as nourishment for his intimate, transcendental speech. On the one hand, we have his books, exquisite vessels of painstaking creativeness, where there is a confluence of fragments of poems transcribed by the artist in his own handwriting, and a variety of vignettes or illustrations, resolved at the strike of pure stains, overwhelming emotion following the catharsis of the reading. This approach reminds us of ancient scrolls, decorated with miniatures and a profusion of details, all of which gives us the feeling of being in front of something sacred, mystical. There the plastic communion between painting and calligraphy describes an aromatic forest, a surprise for the senses, a cosmos inhabited by the expertise of someone who understands the fury of love.

What strikes me the most about his work is the sensitivity and culture that loom behind every line, the ambiguity of the statements that avoid being direct and which lean towards the ellipsis, the dense spiritual value and emotional load throbbing in the selection of poems, compounding an endearing repertoire that defines the artist's life and his identity circumstances. Hence the self-confessed passion for bards like Constantine Kavafy, Federico García Lorca, Walt Whitman, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rainer Maria Rilke, Severo Sarduy and José Lezama Lima, names too restless and visceral, rather than a deserved tribute constitutes an exercise of great coherence, in the same way that paper turns out to be a brittle material and these glass cabinets the ideal prison for a sentimental, delicate, exquisite work.

Each piece of this series is like an affaire, the daily story of a sublime romance, suggested through a visual grammar that is part of a unique, accomplished style. Leaves, branches, circles, ovals, sprouts, spirals, are a frenzy of incarnated concepts. Already the French Rococo painter Jean-Antoine Watteau projected in his portraits of gallant celebrations the world to which he did not have access, imagining romantic scenes in which he never dared to draw a kiss. Equally melancholic is sometimes the work of Bencomo, bold in suggestion and elusive in explicitness.

Rubens Riol
Art Critic



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