

The cure for everything is salt water:
Sweat, tears or the sea.

— Isak Dinesen, 1934

Water always seeks balance.¹ Upon birth, the liquid finds a way to escape to the surface through fractures, pores or cracks. The idea of a spring, something that bursts forth forcefully from the earth, is revealing. Its crystalline veins purify forests, create refuges and nourish us. They are the sustenance of life. In Carla Cascales' latest work, a series of large-format paintings and sculptures created *ad hoc* for this exhibition, water is the guiding element.

Water, fountain, stream, brook.

Imagine a river. It is in constant motion, flowing, changing. The water we see is never once the same, but the river preserves its identity. Thales of Miletus believed that the land we tread is an island of sorts, floating on water like a log floats on a river. Known as the founder of the first philosophy school in Greece, Thales was the forerunner to move away from mythology and resort to rational explanations to understand the world. In his cosmology, water was the arché (ἀρχή), the principle and origin of all things, the fundamental substance from which the universe originated.

In Athens, at the end of the 6th century BC, a series of reforms were carried out in order to improve the city's water supply. This led to an increase in pottery production and a very creative period ensued. Then, the hydria was born: a ceramic vessel designed to collect, transport, contain and pour water. This object, both functional and symbolic, was closely related with women's lives in Ancient Greece. Its use extended beyond everyday tasks like drawing water from a fountain or preparing baths; it also enabled women to step outside the household and engage in community life. The hydria was a central feature in social celebrations such as wedding and funeral rituals, the *Anthesteria*, daily ablutions, and the *Hydrophoria*, an Athenian festival to welcome spring.

Reinterpreting the past requires time, courage and humility. With simplicity and boldness, Carla Cascales takes the hydria as a symbol and antecedent. She removes all ornamentation, forsaking drawing and color to reach the essence. Minimalism isn't about surrounding oneself with few things; it's about eliminating distractions and barriers to what is essential.²

¹ Theodor Schwenk, *Sensitive Chaos: The Creation of Flowing Forms in Water and Air*, 1989, Ed. Rudolf Steiner

² Marta D. Riezu, *Agua y Jabón*, 2021, Ed. Terranova

Carla honors the original purpose of the object, emphasizing the beauty of its everyday use rather than its status as a luxury item.

One can glimpse a profound connection with the material in the sculptures displayed in the antechamber of the gallery. Freed from their handles, the pieces leave behind their primary function as vessels, transcending their practical purpose and turning into sculptures. Some of them show the fracture and the wound; in others, cracks appear. Slowly, water leaves its trace, seeping through and soaking everything. The same happens on the paintings.

Pigments flood the large linen canvases. Water acts as a true creative force while the artist intervenes without seeking control, allowing the artwork to unfold organically. Echoing Novalis' words, water embodies a sensitive chaos. Through a curated selection of pigments on each canvas, water generates a spectrum of mineral and aqueous hues. The challenge lies in predicting how the colours will blend, while embracing the unpredictability of the result. The liquid flows, filters and gushes out irrepressibly, *like a spring*.

César Manrique's words about Walt Whitman come to mind: "Shame on you for not resembling nature!". That should precisely be our ultimate aspiration.

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