

Luis Vidal

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LUIS VIDAL: OF FAIRYTALES AND NIGHTMARES

The vulnerability and fragility in a hostile environment, is the *basso continuo* in Luis Vidal's oeuvre. For over a decade, the Spanish artist has been denouncing exploitation of minors (physical, sexual or emotional abuse) in a self-destructive society that blinds itself from a reality permeating all social and political strata worldwide. Luis Vidal surveys through the violence towards minors, scrutinizing the illnesses of a predator world that devours its own vulnerable offspring. The artist works obsessively, utilizing universal symbols, and an array of childhood memorabilia, toys and games, thus creating a dollhouse of horrors that resembles a garden of delights turned inferno. Mankind betrays paradise and Luis Vidal colors the hells of humanity.

He considers himself a self-taught artist; although Vidal did attend years of art-school education, he refused the academic schooling and opted for practical hands-on learning. Very early on the artist began to form himself as primarily a sculptor, starting with derivative forged iron abstract sculptures that evoked the Spanish modernist school. Soon his preoccupations shifted towards a more engaged contemporary discourse, an interest in provocation and scandal: an obsession with bodily secretions, pre-birth and womb-life, and finally the early stages of childhood and its taboos.

In 1990, Rosa Martinez,(co-director of Bienal de Venecia 2005 and Chief-Curator in the Museum of Modern Art of Istanbul),included him in the Bienal de Arte Contemporáneo de Girona, a moment that marked the official beginning of his career at age 20, which was solidified through public architectural interventions and group and solo exhibitions in the national sphere. By the mid 1990s, Luis Vidal had gained local acclaim with his creation of "Lindos", newborn sized figurative sculptures in porcelain, bronze or polyurethane which were presented -or rather staged- in disquieting contexts. The artist's goal was (and still is) to "provoke discomfort amongst the public", to "make the viewer aware of the deficiencies in early life that lead to wrongful actions during adulthood." He was investigating the union between the two ages of man: childhood and adulthood. His creations gradually grew –as

a fetus would- from a pre-infant to newborn baby, to toddler, and most recently pre-adolescent child.

As the Internet became a household consumer item, Vidal quickly began to use this as a source to feed his work. It was by casually surfing the web that he was bombarded with illegal pornography sites that finally conducted to child pornography. To further explore the dynamics of childhood in violent environments, the artist began using this spring openly accessible to all (including children), and ignored by most to treat the taboo subject of child abuse became, thus becoming this the leitmotiv of Vidal's work.

Amid Luis Vidal's most controversial moments was the presentation in Art Miami (1999) of a wallpaper featuring outlined drawings of photographs of children being sexually molested, the work although subtle (only partial bodies and no faces were depicted) was too graphic, obscene and assaulting for the American public. The police was called upon and came to close down the exhibition, only with the signatures of participating gallerists and later the acquisition of the work by an American foundation for children could the work –which was actually a denunciation against child abuse- be kept on the show.

It is not only as visual artist that Luis Vidal presents himself, he is a multifaceted artist-com-entrepreneur, business man, press man and promoter. Most evident is this in the plurality of his immersions in projects from cinematography (the feature film "Muertesita," 1998), to curatorial explorations (group exhibition "From A Black Hole, Cuba," 2001; endeavours in the world of fashion and design ("changing room", Barcelona, 2006-07) and more recently, a socially involved creative project that searches for new ways of fundraising for underdeveloped African regions ("Euroafricans", Senegal, 2007).

In a more recent series, the naïve, stained innocence of a truncated childhood is depicted in installations and drawings, using as iconographic reference Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights. This becomes the departing point towards a seemingly endless threaded story of abuses, where predators (crocodiles, wolves, snakes...) are not a representation of nature, but a metaphor of man. The delicacy of the depictions, and decorative innocence of their finish are but an omen of the obscene brutality and violence beneath the glossy façade of our fast-paced world of technological improvement.

With each work, Luis Vidal dares to walk the tight, fine line between sadism, and its condemnation.

Luis Vidal has extensively exhibited in international galleries, institutions and museums, like the Bass Museum (Miami), Herning Kunstmuseum (Copenhagen), Fundació La Caixa (Barcelona), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Buenos Aires) and Centro Cultural de España (Mexico D.F., Buenos Aires, Lima, Miami). His has been acquired by several international private and public collections, among them Martin Z. Margulies (Miami, USA), Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslauten (Germany), Jack Helgesen Collection (Norway, Oslo), Colección Hugobono (Puerto Rico, USA)

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