



*Conversations with the Toad who
Drank Aguardiente at 5:30pm in El
Muelle de La Bodeguita*

By Cayetano Sanz de Santamaria

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Thesis Statement

The following paintings take place under a surreal Cartagena de Indias sunset. This colonial city located in the Colombian Caribbean has served as profound inspiration in my artistic path, and I hold it dearly as a reference point for both adventure and inspiration.

My soul purpose is to induce narrative into the viewer's imagination allowing them to get lost for a while in the details of the artworks. Although my work has some external references and inspirations that can come from philosophy, music, history and books, I don't expect the viewer to catch them. Instead, each person has the opportunity to stimulate their inner minds and feelings with the components of my paintings while creating their own narrative.

The grand majority of my work is done in Ink and watercolor on unprimed canvas, while a few ones are graphite or ink with watercolor on cotton paper. This technique has allowed me to create artworks that are balanced between the aesthetics of a painting and a drawing.

I am completely fascinated by the idea of unleashing the chaos of my mind while combining it with the order of figurative painting and the architecture of Cartagena in order to express my artistic language with full honesty and passion.



Foreword

By Manuela Cabrales

In the 18th century, when the second-largest fleet in history attempted to invade a rather small colonial city in the Caribbean coast, a man without an eye, a leg, and an arm; and only 6 ships, defeated the invasion. The one and only “half-man” was Blas de Lezo, one of the most important naval officers in Spanish naval history that led to one of the British Royal Navy’s greatest defeats defending Cartagena de Indias in 1741. If the story wasn’t surreal enough, Admiral Vernon, who led the siege from the English side, made the mistake of assuming that the battle was already won sending the great news to England where the false victory was celebrated manufacturing medals showing Blas de Lezo with two arms, two legs, and two eyes; kneeling before Vernon.

Many would have said that the story is surreal, and it truly is; nonetheless, it embodies the essence of Cartagena de Indias, a city where the real, the mythical and the fantasy are intertwined. *Conversations with the Toad who Drank Aguardiente at 5:30pm in El Muelle de La Bodeguita* body of work, precisely depicts the ironical and magic surreality that embraces the city. The detailed artworks are inundated by endless mysterious stories personified by intriguing creatures that offer a vast scenario, located among Cartagena’s architecture, where the viewer can get lost.

Throughout the artworks, Cayetano Sanz de Santamaria, does not just offer us a window to his creative world ruled by his vast imagination, but gives us the access to understand the magic realism of Cartagena de

Indias and Colombia. Where a pelican drinks an *aguardiente* shot with a toad below the sunset light; a crab, an octopus, an armadillo, a *marimonda* and the Carnival of Barranquilla bull mask play a *vallenato*; and a man without an eye, an arm and a leg, successfully defended the walled city against one of the largest fleet in history.

Short Story

By Franck Harb Zuluaga

“I’ve grown accustomed to fear pleasure, this godforsaken town has made me resent it” the man thought as a delicate blend of purple and orange hues started to dominate the color palette that reflected from his empty glass. The memory of this city of eternal decadence, that has served him throughout his fugitive life as a blinding beam of passion and comradeship, is overshadowed by the excruciating weight of his own guilt. A guilt that lights fire to his deepest, most unnerving thoughts.

The young fisherman has taken the chance to confide his blues to the closest of his relationships and the reactions always seem to deem him as a hyperbolic buffoon. As a dramatic drunk. The simple suggestion that what the man experiences is merely the emotional hangover that has been known to humans since humans are humans, has repeatedly brought his already troubling mind to the verge of indulging in unforgivable acts. Hence, he has stopped speaking of the images that take over his mind on Sundays.

The hallucinations have always been there, since the man was a child. Yet, the darkness that has been introduced to his experiences has daunted the nature of that which he sees but isn’t there. Never diagnosed, never analyzed, the man successfully made it his own responsibility to dim the influence the images had been taking over his life, that until he arrived at Cartagena.

Originally from a small town where his lunacy was common knowledge, when he arrived at the magical

city he entertained himself with the thought of living a *compos mentis* appearing life. Nonetheless, a restless mind such as his is a terrible thing to contain. He had a system, and for the better part of the week that system worked, but when his mind was left alone with the psychological backlash of a night out, then, then he wished he had never tried to contain anything. Regretting everything he said, wailing over the way he acted towards someone, his insanity plays games with his anxiety and terrorizes the young man, inundating his mind with so many images that it actually makes it difficult for the man to see what is right in front of his eyes. But now these images talk, and ask him to do certain chores, and he’s finally giving up, he’s finally starting to listen.

No wonder the man fears pleasure, he fears what pleasure will do to those around him. The man is not well. The man knows he has to stop. Yet there he sits, drinking by himself, staring at his glass, fearing what his weekly delirium might make him do.



*El Alcalde de Cartagena
2060 (The Mayor of Cart-
agena 2060), 2020, ink on
toned paper, 12x12in*

Después de un par de años ya todo estaba bajo el agua. Esas preocupaciones de si el mundo iba pa' bien o pa' mal eran parte del pasado, de un pavor que se extinguió con el último pendejo recordado como "humano". Pavor que ya no sienten los que reinan ahora en una Cartagena sumergida. Ernesto Torres da su paseo habitual por la muralla en la que Blas de Lezo le casco a los ingleses en mil setecientos y pico, y envuelve uno de sus ocho brazos en una de esas vainas en las que los "humanos" se paraban a tomarse fotos (esa cosa que parece un barril con sombrero. Como se llame, no me jodan). Y se pregunta si su manera de gobernar semejante ciudad tan sabrosa que dejaron esos babosos es lo suficientemente buena, o si tiene que meterle más tentáculo duro a la situación ya que un huevo de barracudas andan jodiendo por ahí y espantando a los turistas que nadan pa' conocer semejante joyita caribeña. El viejo Ernie se relaja porque sabe que hay solución y que en este mundo de agua salada nada es tan jodido cómo solía ser como cuando pasaban lanchas por el cielo, y piensa "uyyy que rico sería un guarito mientras baja el sol".



Viernes 3 am (Friday 3am), 2020, graphite on toned paper, 12x16in



Burning Skies and the Stubborn Bravery of a Forgotten God, 2021, graphite and watercolor on cotton paper, 22x28in

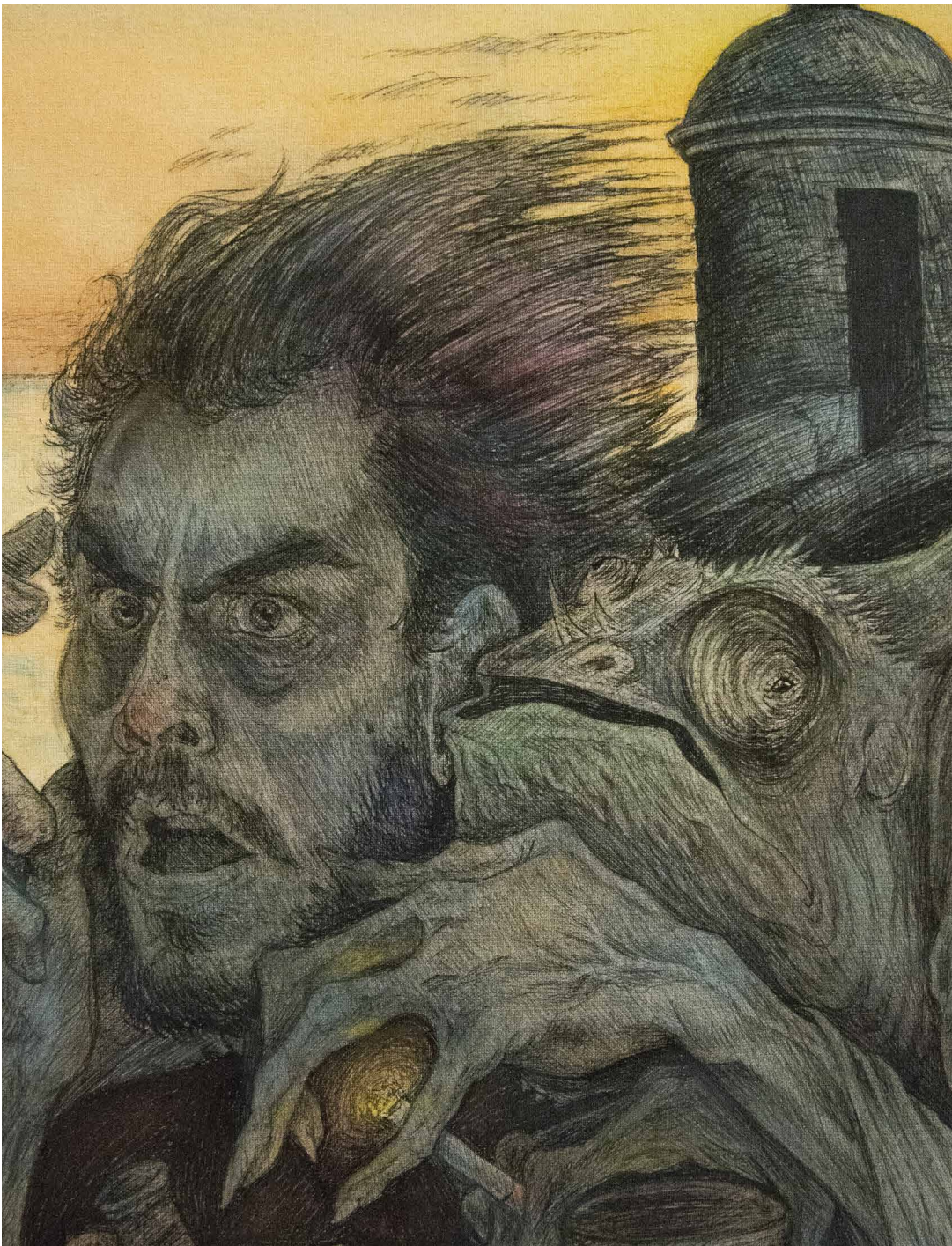


The Oil Spill, 2020, ink
and watercolor on
unprimed canvas, 8x7in



La Bella y la Bestia del Caribe (The Beauty and the Beast of the Caribbean), 2020, ink and watercolor on unprimed canvas, 34x26in





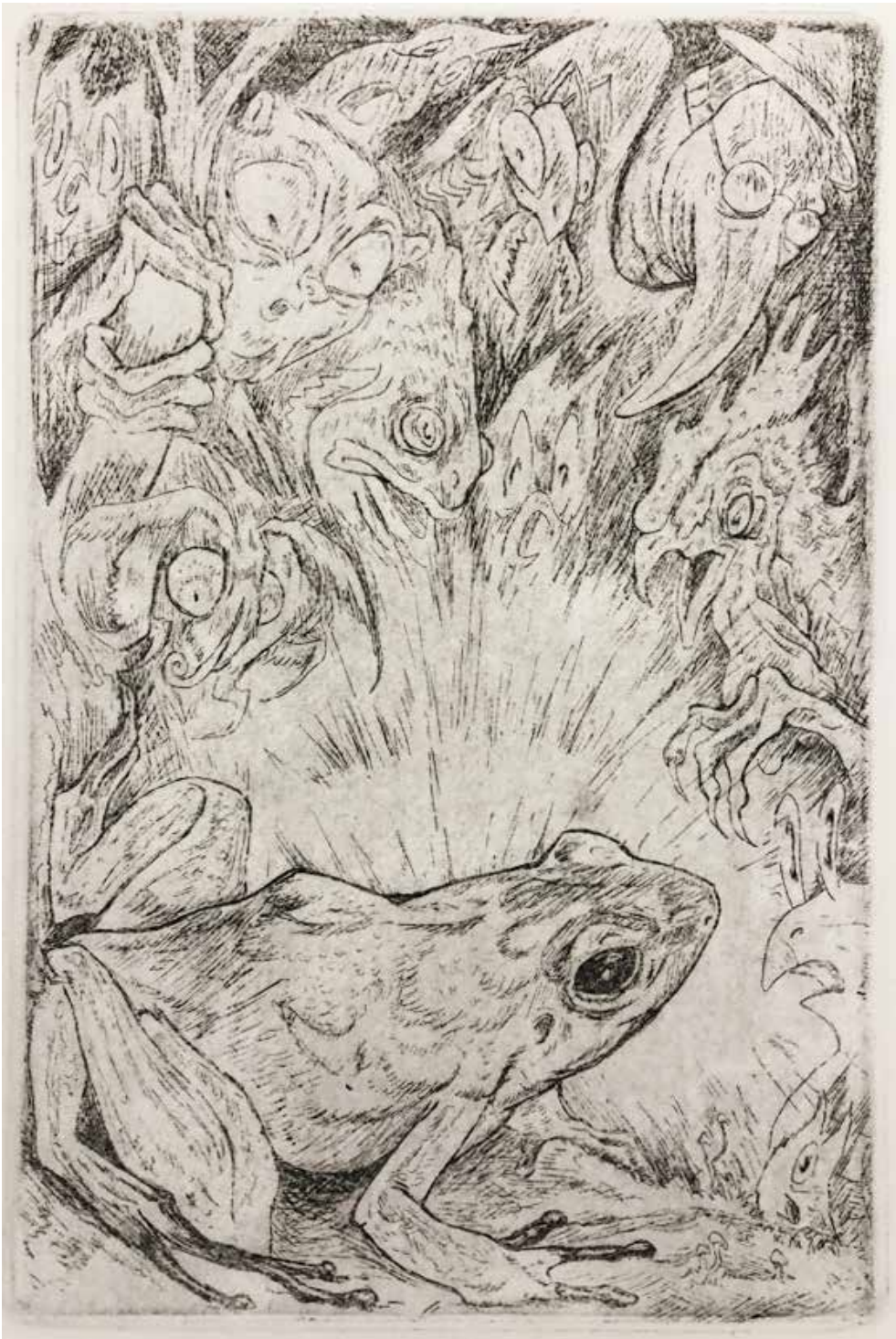
Sunday Scaries/Self-Portrait, 2020, watercolor on unprimed canvas, 14x11in



*Untitled, 2021, ink and
watercolor on cotton paper,
9x22 in*



Riders on the Storm, 2021,
ink and watercolor on cotton
paper, 9x22 in



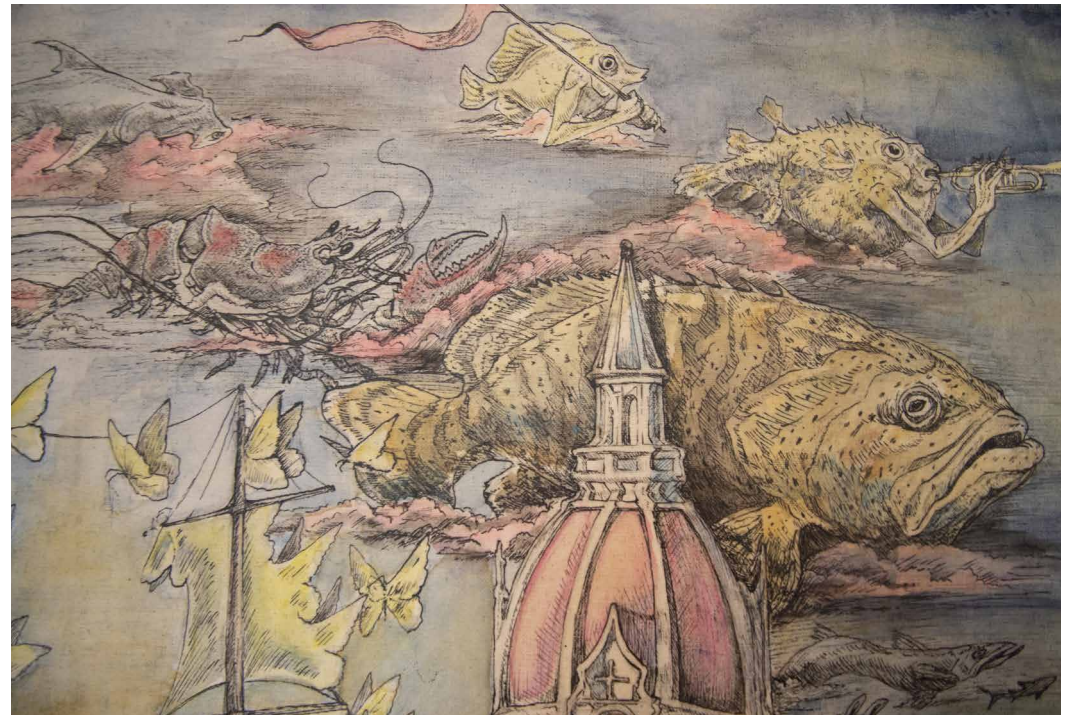
Ratio Terribilis, 2021, etching, 8x5in



What the Old Mask Brought,
2021, ink and watercolor on
unprimed canvas, 8x7in



*I Had to Pay the Swordfish
a Couple of Pesos to Dock
my Heart in El Muelle de
la Bodeguita, 2021, ink
and watercolor on un-
primed canvas, 33x65in*







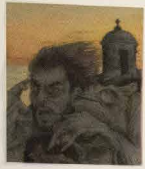
*The Fish Market of Las
Bovedas, 2021, ink and wa-
tercolor on unprimed canvas,
38x87 in*













Epilogue

By Rodrigo Luque

Dionysus in the Temple

On the Paintings of Cayetano Sanz De Santamaria

*“You walk over the dead, Beauty, and you laugh,
horror is not your least magical jewel,
and among your most dear trinkets, crime
in your proud womb dances lovingly.”*

Charles Baudelaire (From “Hymn to Beauty”)

Chaos and order coexist in our reality in perfect balance, but they are elastic and can be channeled in infinite ways. The artist is capable of manipulating chaos and order intentionally, using new combinations of these elements to create parallel realities and expand our consciousness. The oeuvre of Cayetano opens up the tab to a multiplicity of these parallel realities which expand the mind and spirit. His art is nourished by a vast array of artists and thinkers, and yet what it offers is absolutely personal; it stands autonomous and unique, breathing in the foreign wisdom but not leaning on it. It is an oeuvre that welcomes the outside world into its own palpitating ecosystem, rather than the other way around. This is visible in the passion that these paintings emanate, as no such passion can be born without firm roots into one's own personal spirit. Along with its spirit of freedom, this oeuvre holds an all-encompassing ambition. The world created in these paintings is not local or specific, but rather

it attempts to reach the very core of our human condition, to touch the sap of human experience and stir it, and it achieves its purpose with grace. How does Cayetano reach this movingly ambitious goal?

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche develops the idea of the Dionysiac and the Apolline as metaphors of chaos and order, respectively. He also explains that art reaches a full maturity and awe when it achieves a novel equilibrium between the two, as Greek tragedy did. The work of Cayetano is a first-rate example of this equilibrium. The paintings can never be fully interpreted, as this would suck the marrow out of them – art must always remain in the realm of possibility, never of full actuality – so I will limit myself to unravelling some of the many windows these images open. The most representative and ambitious work is *The Fish Market of Las Bovedas*. Here we face seven chambers each filled with a different version of chaos, and all divided by the sturdy columns of a classic construction. The contrast between chaos and order is immediately visible. Nietzsche himself mentions the Greek ionic columns as the main pillars of order, as the architectural face of Apollo. These pillars of order, in Cayetano's painting, literally hold back a horde of Dionysiac shapes that threaten to overflow the painting. This painting is a depiction of the seven deadly sins, yes, but it is also an image of Dionysus in the temple; the god of wine and chaos held back by the firm columns of Apollo. It is shapelessness versus shape, confusion versus clarity, variety versus singularity. It is a depiction of the human psyche when it has integrated

its Jungian shadow, when the chaotic elements have been recognized, faced, and even enjoyed, all thanks to the power of order. But the threat of overflow is always present, and this is crucial. Death, madness, and sin, which are nothing but the dissolution of Apolline limits, are always at the doorstep. This is why Cayetano's columns are transgressed by his sinful creatures. The snake surrounds one, the lustful bull peaks his head over another, an eerie creature with four udders reaches out to the ankle of a passerby. However, the columns stand firm and visible, life, sanity, and virtue are maintained. The fact that the author recognizes their permanent threat is what makes him an artist.

The painting *I Had to Pay the Swordfish a Couple of Pesos to Dock my Heart in El Muelle de la Bodeguita* holds a very similar combination, though here the Dionysiac element acquires new dimensions. Not only do the shapes and creatures dance with one another, but they also dissolve into each other. The Flamingo is the most conspicuous example. It is a purely fluid being, composed of clouds, its flamingo head, and two eerie human hands which dominate the center of the image. However, despite its fluidity, it magically presents the cogency of a single living entity. What makes this fluid being an individual? What provides this Dionysiac substance with its Apolline limits? Perhaps the unity of color, perhaps its shape and expression, or perhaps our eyes as viewers, which always seek to order and define. The painting permits for these questions to remain open, giving us other examples of unitary fluidity such as the fish boat or the butterfly sails. In this boat, it is worth mentioning, lies the heart, at the same position where it would be if the canvas was a human body – slightly to the left. It is the only main

element which is at sea. All the rest are at least partly contained in the chaos of the city. The heart, on the other hand, also has a bearing on the calm order of the sea. The heart, the artist, the locus of consciousness, stands right in the middle between chaos and order. That is where the sap of life and of art reside. This is, also, where they are always at threat of shipwreck.

This sap is not only at the middle of Cayetano's paintings, but also at the underlying core of all mythologies, religions, and narrative. It is the infinite and the undefinable, Krishna and Anaximander's apeiron at once. That which all mythology orbits, that is what this artist seeks. Of course, humans can have no full access to this pulp, neither through nature nor art – Arjuna cannot withstand the sight of Krishna for too long and Semele dies at the very sight of Zeus. However, this undefined locus can be seduced and glimpsed at through art. Cayetano's paintings allow us to do just that. Everything converges here, and for good reason. The variety of figures and inventions does not stand short of El Bosco or Brueghel. The regional references go from Latin America all the way to Asia, passing through some other imaginary tropics. Beings merge, mythologies converse, and reality and dreams copulate. The imagery is eclectic because the author intuits the sap underlying each myth, religion, story, and region. Cayetano seeks to trace the wisdom that he intuits from all the traditions he has met, and to depict it in a single canvas each time. He unfolds all his visual artillery and his technical skill in order to reach that fragrance of wisdom, and the paintings are a moving testimony of this pursuit.

The self-portrait *Sunday Scaries/El Secreto* displays the artist's attempts. He brings his daemon with him, along with the substances that facilitate the daemon's corporality in this plane of existence, smokable or drinkable. The daemon and the substances aid him in trying to tell the viewer what he sees, to try and collate all his fragmentary wisdom into one single beam of light. This can never be fully achieved, but the artist will try, to the point of flirting with madness. The only way to access his intuited wisdom, he knows, is to live it with him firsthand. That is why this self-portrait persuades the viewer to join him on a journey. Behind him, we see the nature of his invitation: a castle tower overlooking the ocean. He invites us to new worlds and new presents (the ocean symbolizing infinite possibility) but builds the foundations of that exploration on the very reality that we live in, which is signaled by the watchtower. This is also the reason why Cayetano never foregoes technical skill for the sake of ingenious concepts. Because he recognizes that the only way to explore the world beyond our understanding is to ground it on the reality we inhabit. This world then, our daily life, just like the technical quality of the paintings, are a necessary trampoline to the endless possibilities of art. Without that elastic basis, there would be no motion forward, just chaos. Cayetano's experience of life and of art is like a stream of riches and of ideas, though in that sense he is not that different to many of us. What makes him stand out is that he can channel that energy, set boundaries to it, build the riverbeds on the sides for that stream to flow in front of the audience's eyes. That way, rather than the usual overflow of thought and of feeling that we experience in real life, in these paintings we

watch a roaring river of life that flows madly in its own well-defined track. We see continuation, chaos within order, the Dionysiac within its Apolline temple columns. We see madness from sanity, substance abuse from sobriety, destruction from creation. With Cayetano's paintings, we experience the chaotic and marvelous stream of existence but from a high enough altitude to be able to appreciate it in its full dimension. In short, we meet Dionysus within the temple.



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