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Tuesday, October 18, 2016

Adrián Doura and landscapes altered under the influence of cinema

IN SALTA THE ARTIST PRESENTS BEAUTIFUL PAINTINGS THAT HAVE THE EXPRESSIVE ELOQUENCE OF THE COMICS – Based in France for the past 30-plus years, Adrián Doura has returned to his native Argentina to show, in Salta's Provincial Museum of Fine Arts, landscapes in which photography, painting and cinema combine.



Ana Martínez Quijano

THEATRICALITY. Reality is just the starting point in a universe which, in being transported to the canvas, turns artificial.

From our special correspondent in Salta - After portraying the landscape of our terrain in his Paris studio, Adrián Doura, an Argentine artist based in France for over three decades, has returned to exhibit his huge paintings in Salta's lovely Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes. The procedure bears the hallmark of this artist and reveals the shifts from photography to painting and cinema: three disciplines coincide in his oeuvre.

Under the formidable influence of cinema, Doura presents his large paintings as if they were movie screens. After, the images of rivers and streams, the fields with their giant cactuses, lakes, mountains and skies, make up an installation. The large paintings are hung under the peak of the Lullaillaco volcano painted [sic] on a wall twice as high as the surrounding gallery. It is this same volcano, which, at its height of over 6000 meters, five centuries ago, harbored the sacrificed children, the mummies that today draw tourism here. The brushstrokes in black ink that limn the volcano's peak quote oriental painting, in reminiscence of Hiroshige's views of Mount Fuji.

Yet the film Doura has painted draws art history into the present. The theatricality of the landscape has all the expressive eloquence of comic-book art. Indeed, the absence of man in these empty spaces in which the past reverberates or the warning goes out that something strange could happen, makes the viewer the main actor in the work.

The tracking over this scenario, this staging, triggers the imagination. A vast rock in the form of a fist is real: it's called El Centinela, The Sentry, since it breaks earth's surface to rise up and dominate the landscape. Nevertheless, reality is just the starting point in a universe which, in being transported to the canvas, turns artificial. Doura alters and simplifies forms, lays stress on dynamism, rhythms and

tensions. It's how he captures the landscape's energy. The artist goes in quest of the commotion, the emotion prompted at times by the encounter with nature and, to that end, shakes up trends and styles.



Alterations of the landscape are recurrent over the history of art. In his *vedute* Canaletto altered the perspective, widened the field of vision, raised the bridges and, when he painted the tower of Piazza San Marco, achieved a monumental effect. Doura today replaces Canaletto's preliminary sketches with the numerous photographs he manipulates until he has forged a landscape of his own. Freed from a bond to the model, he salvages the images that loom up from his aesthetic unconscious, paints a "super reality" and aspires – as André Breton would put it – to the expansion of the world of sensation and expression. The landscape seems to reveal, then, qualities that have resided in this latent state.

Writing of the 18th-century *veduta*, the U.S. theoretician David Jacobson points out, in his catalog essay for this show, that "Doura has ... applied the compositional principles of this product of European Enlightenment to the dizzying vastness of the New World." The exhibition is called *MontañAgua* [MountainWater] and, given the conceptual issue surrounding the two elements in play, Jacobson draws an analogy to *shanshui*, the Chinese ideogram for landscape (shan: mountain; shui: water/river). Yet ultimately, in Doura's new vocabulary *MontañAgua*, what resonates strongly is the letter ñ, eñe, as rooted in our language as it is in the powerful heritage of our territory.

Translated by David Jacobson-

<http://www.ambito.com/859099-adrian-doura-y-unos-paisajes-alterados-por-influjo-del-cine>

Portraits of the Earth: How Nature Speaks through Art

An exhibition by the Argentine artist Adrián Doura at the Museum of Fine Arts in Salta [Argentina] takes landscape as its main theme. A voyage toward perspective and the experiences of the observer, which create a unique sense of elation and a singular interaction with the work



By [Martina Putruele](#) *Infobae* , October 16, 2016



"Cruzando el Charco" [Crossing the Pond], one of Adrián Doura's paintings

Who among us has never seen faces in the rocks or shapes in the clouds? Expectant and sly expressions lurking amid the vegetation. The mental images and the recollections that landscapes evoke are the great themes in the work of Adrián Doura, the Argentine artist who, based in Paris for the past 30 years, returns to his native country to offer his new show *MontañaAgua* [MountainWater], in which magical realism is powerfully deployed to create pieces in which the imagination distorts nature.

The show opened on Friday, October 14 at 8:30 PM, and **will continue until December 4 at Salta's Museo de Bellas Artes de Salta** (Avenida Belgrano 992). It consists of 13 large-scale works whose main themes are portraits of nature; paintings in which the viewer's perspective plays a key role in giving life to the image and in eliciting, in each separate viewer's mind, unique sensations of belonging, and memories of times past.

The surface of the water, earth, rocks and sky are the preferred motifs of this artist whose pieces and scales are defined in relation to those of the observer. **For this exhibition, Doura has also executed a work in situ:** a mural drawing on the wall of the museum's main gallery, 8.5 meters high and 16 meters high, representing the heights of the province's Llullaillaco volcano.



Adrián Doura in front of one of his diptychs

"This is an installation made up of works that are not part of a series but that does have a conceptual thread to it, a harmony. Every detail, every cloud, is triangulated," the artist said of his show, in a conversation with **Infobae**. Doura began to work on landscape in 1993, during an artist's residency in l'Estaque, outside Marseille. Fascinated by the light, relief and singularity of the clouds, the painter and [former] sculptor has seen his monumental works exhibited all over the world, from France, Monaco, Spain, and the United States to Turkey and Argentina.

Doura, who received his professional training at the École Nationale de Beaux Arts in Paris, **has borrowed the Freudian concept of "oceanic sentiment"** and defines it with the enveloping magic with which he captivates his public. There are no people in his paintings, but rather it is the person who observes the work who becomes one with it, beguiled by its brushstrokes and its trompe-l'oeil style, since it promises to be hyperrealism but, on closer inspection, a metamorphosis gives ways to textures, colors and at moments even abstractions which aren't part of this movement.



In Doura's works, perception plays the key role

What is at play here, more than anything, is metarealism. He prefers to define it as "magic realism," though he knows the term isn't accepted. It's that Doura paints real landscapes, such as routes along the magical Highway 40 /[trayectos de la mágica Ruta 40](#)/ with its impressive giant cacti, the splendid valley Calchaquí and Talampaya, and later alters them, transforms them into magical bridges leading to the imaginary world.

One example of this manipulation is his work "Río Rosa" [Pink River [?no Pink Cloud?]], a diptych created this year, which pays homage to the children of Lullaillaco who were found in March 1999, extremely well preserved by the cold at the top of the volcano, at a height of 6,700 meters above sea level. The painting in question shows a real place, between [Cachi](#) and Molinos in the north of Argentina; yet the colors of its waters, which take on blood hues, and its rocks which recall small skulls, tell another story: that of some indigenous sacred rite and the sacrifices that are a part of it.



“Río Rosa”, [Pink River], one of the works in “Montaña Agua”

"My great inspiration has been nature. I'm also very much interested in psychoanalysis and the symbology of the dual: feminine and masculine, ying and yang." This is absolutely clear in the exhibition, in which femininity and masculinity are intertwined and found in their most rustic forms in the landscape, to create life, light and movement.

Doura describes his works as "portraits of the earth, how nature regards you." He has, he says, a very strong bond with it, and feels it, and speaks to it. It's the reason he creates relations, succeeding at an infinite process constructed within the work but which doesn't exist in reality. "They're icons that tend to create and evoke a feeling in a person's brain. They're looking for a reminiscence, for touching on a set of experiences born out our visual culture. It all takes off from the language of nature."

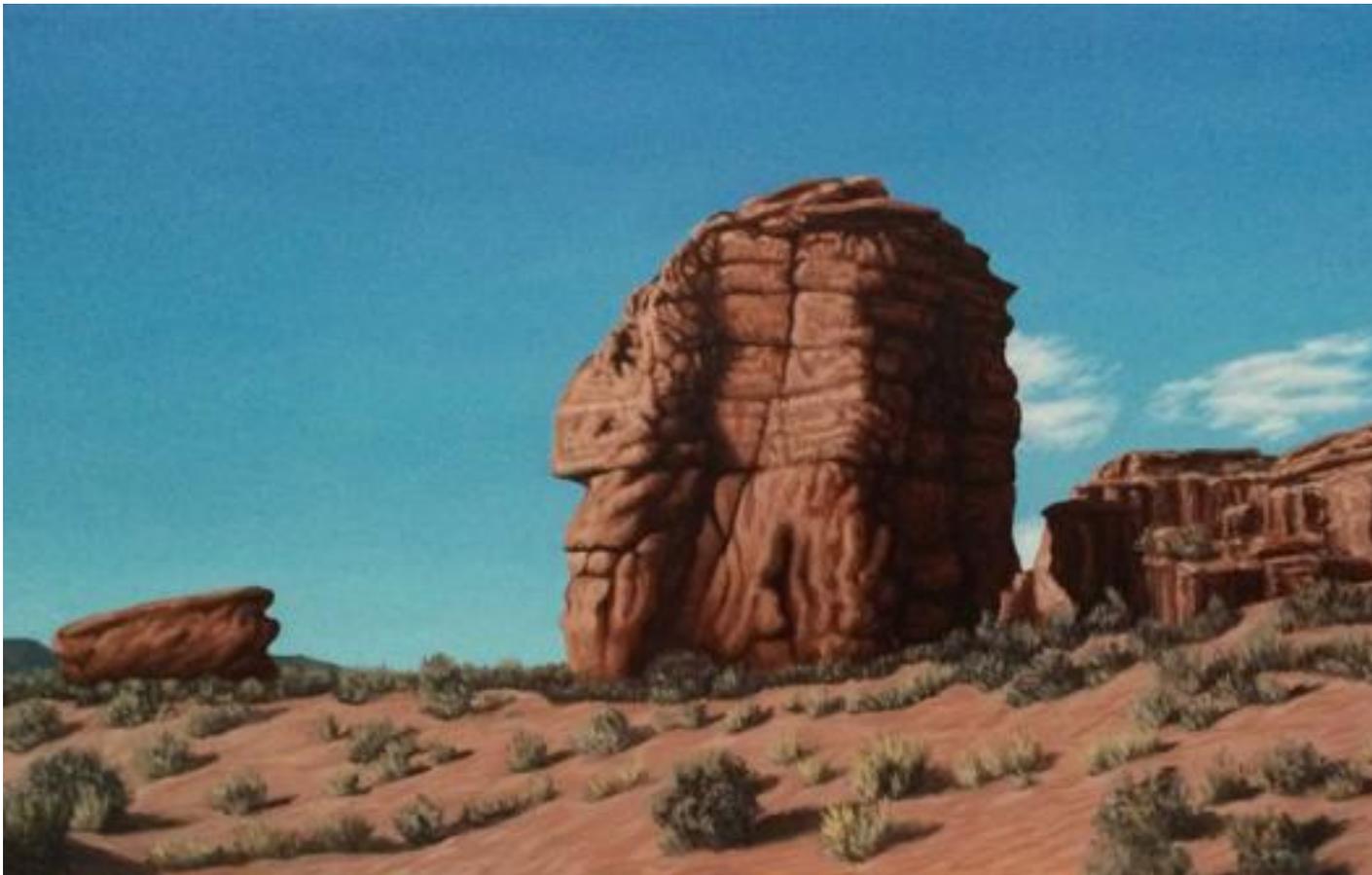


Earth and water are the great themes in Doura's oeuvre

The critic and academic David Jacobson, who has written a catalog essay for Doura's installation, observes that in *MontañAgua*, "**Doura clearly relishes the plenitude of the intensely varied surfaces** he depicts, from the Plate River to Argentina's northwest. These capacious landscapes play constantly upon expectations of anthropomorphic or creaturely presences, through idols that communicate through portents of weather or time of day or ambiguous lines on rocky surfaces that suggest an inscrutable 'gaze' on the part of nature."

The only piece that doesn't belong among the autochthonous landscapes of Argentina is "Crossing the Pond," a painting based on a photograph Doura took while traveling over the British Channel to Marseille. It is a unique work that mingles the blues of the firmament and of the ocean, through a singular skill that transports the viewer to a bubble amid the clouds.

Doura creates cinematographic images. His show is like a tracking shot over still, absorbing canvases that lure the viewer to "enter the work" and be part of the whole. They are images of images; memories of memories of nature, vivid and looming, ever in waiting, ever on the lookout, as we sense in the murmurs of their woods, the sighs of their waters and the lashings of their winds.



"MontañAgua" is on view at the Museum of Fine Arts [Museo de Bellas Artes] in Salta, Argentina.

The exhibition can be visited between October 14 and December 4.

Where: in Galleries 3 and 4 at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Salta (Avenida Belgrano 992).

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Translated by David Jacobson

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