

WINTER JOURNEY

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Sense of the Real, ARS 06 Museum of Contemporary Art KIASMA

Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz, in their recent work entitled *Travelers*, reconstruct the journey as transition, adventure or mishap and they monumentalize it by means of a snow globe, a symbol of souvenir and memory, which since the 19th Century, has aimed to capture the beauty of the snow scape and the silhouette of cities in a winter fantasy.

The snow globe seems to encapsulate in a fictional mockup that quaint, kitsch tale of the sublime experience as a formulation to popularize the intensity of the romantic journey.

Each of these snow globes has been constructed and designed to contain a snowy tale that is later on photographed. Inside the sphere, life becomes a transition to nowhere, characters appear lost in a hostile environment and vainly try to find a path which has ceased to exist: they are a metaphor for the modern world, constructed as a continuous landscape of spaces of transit and paths, lines of communication or waiting areas.

In the 90's scale models favored a fertile reflection on relativity and the imprecision of the idea of truth; and allowed the validity and value of models to be tackled in a critical way.

The work of Martin and Muñoz certainly connects with these proposals of a constructed reality to the extent to which it acts as a mock-up, but on the other hand distances itself from them by tackling a world of fantasy, inscribed on the imaginary and without contact with the credible, putting to one side any bleeding between reality and fiction. Their winter no-lands are spaces which take in the imaginary occurrence of small individual disasters, extolled as monuments of daily desolation.

Schubert's *Winterreise* isn't a journey through a landscape, but an itinerary of feelings and passions which lead to an interior which is both shredded and wished for, a decisive journey which leads to one's own rescue. In this way, the snow globes in *Travelers* construct a

journey to the interior of fear. The snow globe is only apparently innocent: it contains black humor, it's an impossible tale of modern terrors. Travelers who haul their suitcases through the snow, a couple meet and embrace, blessed out, on the tip of an impossible iceberg, a couple who drag a prefabricated cottage through an inhospitable winter or some drivers detained by a soldier amidst a snowfall.

These wintery scenarios refer to an atmosphere that hovers between humor and horror as recreated in the Coen brother's film, *Fargo*. Pushing this perspective, the latest works by Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz have emerged from the snowglobe to fold out as a gigantic panorama. The travelers are scattered in a desolate, snowbound and seemingly nocturnal landscape, laden with their suitcases, trying to find a path that may not even be there.

These images are also reminiscent of those emigrants heading for rich Europe in the 50's and 60's, traveling to hostile and troubled destinations from the Iberian peninsula, the south of Italy, Greece, the Balkans, Turkey...weighed down by suitcases held together by rope. The wars in Bosnia and Kosovo have once again provided this journey to nowhere, but redoubled and multiplied in their tragedy, as a familiar and current image on television screens the world over. Even more so, the images of the new immigration provide us now with a traveler stripped of his dignity, a traveler without luggage, burdened only with the illusions and hope of a better life.

The journey in Walter Martin & Paloma Muñoz's snow globes adds to the blurry sensation that now almost everything has become a "nowhere". To remember this, with certain humor, is to slightly reconcile ourselves with desolation. Winter is also within us.

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