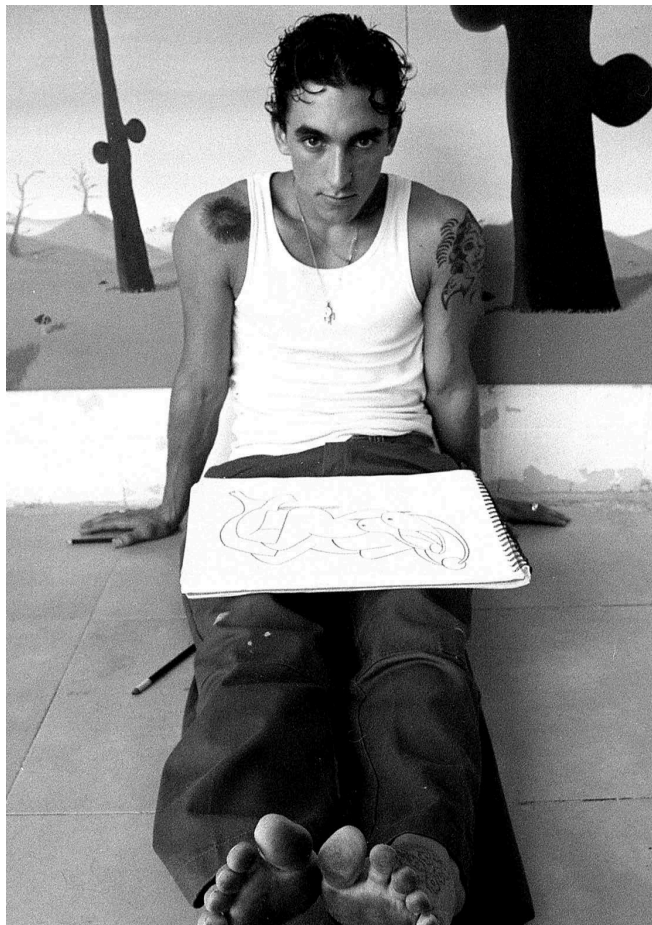


Pedro Hoz



The Alchemical Quest of the Anthropomorphs is the first solo exhibition by artist Pedro Hoz (Spain, 2000) in France. The paintings, created specifically for this exhibition, push the boundaries of imagination by crafting scenes of fantasy conceived from a free composition of real elements combined with purely imaginary and magical ones.

This series of paintings, where invented landscapes and nature play an essential role, generates a sense of estrangement by juxtaposing mysterious and supernatural events against settings brimming with nature, such as forests or beaches. Light scatters and gleams on the surfaces of grass, bodies, and insects, revealing the painter's gaze more clearly than ever. Everything exhibits a pleasant precision typical of an unreal yet plausible world.

Unlike traditional European landscapes, where architecture often appears in some state of decay, ruin, or blurred vision with softened contours, Pedro's atmospheres are vibrant and sharply delineated, as if God had lovingly attended to every creation and natural law followed only abundance and fertility. Fruits multiply, grass grows firm, temperatures are mild, the soil is moist, and all mushrooms are edible. This realm of beauty and plenitude embodies the universal yearning for a religious paradise—a Garden of Eden where God strolls contentedly and barefoot. With these elements, the painter crafts a perfect *mise-en-scène* to express his inner world freely.

This tranquil setting contrasts with the figures inhabiting it, as they seem to carry the ominous mysteries of the deep: distorted bodies, whimsically placed eyes, tangled entities, sorcerers, and decayed still life in a citadel of impossible living forms. However, Pedro's greatest achievement lies in rendering a monstrous, contorted body beautiful. All the twists of his stylized, diabolical forms are imbued with divinity and beauty. In this case, the painter brings to light shapes and attitudes that until now existed solely in his mind, creating scenes that oscillate between fantasy and supernatural intervention.

Pedro's fascination with the content of his imagination drives him to explore the boundaries of reality and magic by featuring sorcerers as protagonists in this series. The alchemist, sorcerer, or magician, adorned with an enormous conical hat, appears in his work dressed ceremonially, wearing a long robe reminiscent of a monk or bishop. His composed demeanour contrasts with the parade of dancing bodies he observes before him, with the calm of a creator or the disbelief of a dreamer. The relationship between the sorcerer and the creator of these anthropomorphs is exemplified in the artist's own words: *"The sorcerers guide the other figures, which is why I see myself as a sorcerer, because I am the one painting them in my studio, surrounded by other friends doing things, as if it were a witches' convention."*

For Goya, witchcraft, superstition, and miracles were nothing more than reason asleep (*"the sleep of reason produces monsters"*). In Pedro's case, however, it is not unreason that generates his figures and supernatural scenes, but reason awake in nocturnal mode after hours of work once the sun has set.