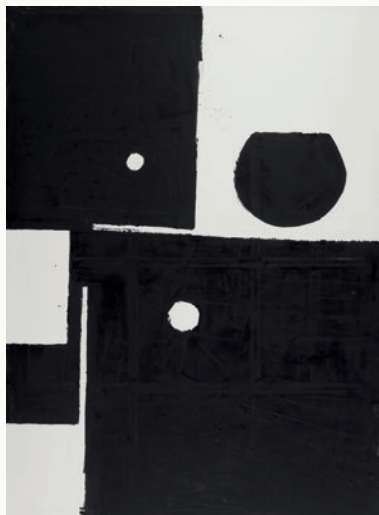


# ACCENTS AND DIFFERENCE

18.09.2020–28.02.2021



MIGUEL  
ÁNGEL  
CAMPANO

# MIGUEL ÁNGEL CAMPANO. ACCENTS AND DIFFERENCE

Imma Prieto

To delve into the universe of Miguel Ángel Campano (Madrid, 1948 - Cercedilla, Madrid, 2018) is to immerse oneself in a multiplicity of references, influences, and styles. The “Accents and Difference” project presented by Es Baluard Museu is a review of the crucial moments of his career: breaking points and times of change, and also of confession.

“Accents and Difference” is, at the same time, a re-reading of the exhibition “D’après”, presented at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 2019. The Madrid show, put together with Campano’s active participation prior to his death, proposed a reflection on the artists who have been key to his work: from Poussin, Delacroix, Guerrero, or Gris to the poetry of Rimbaud and Lorca. The exhibition does not seek to show their legacy directly but, rather, invites us to stop and consider what having come in contact with them had meant for Campano’s own work; how Campano has filtered such diverse visions to create his own “d’après” style. While the “D’après” exhibition brought us to an exhaustive study of a retrospective nature, “Accents and Difference” presents an anthological selection, with an emphasis on Campano’s own endeavour. That is to say, it shows Campano’s approach and proposes a curatorial look at this “after”: how does Campano build his work after Poussin? How does “D’après” elaborate after “D’après”?

The project at Es Baluard Museu fortifies one of the museum’s principal lines of research, from the perspective of the recuperation and historical contextualization of artistic practices that have developed in the Balearic Islands, as well as from that of the necessity of revisiting, rereading and rewriting new historiographies. This act of shining a

Miguel Ángel Campano, *SUBASH*, 20.9.94, 1994.  
Oil on canvas, 320 × 234 cm. Es Baluard Museu  
d’Art Contemporani de Palma, Ajuntament de Palma  
Collection long-term loan

light on the new types of knowledge of our legacy is also part of Campano's own endeavour. It is about returning, re-reading and reimagining other ways of embracing the past and its contexts.

Miguel Ángel Campano is one of the key figures for understanding how pictorial language regained its place on the Spanish art scene of the eighties. Painting forged ahead in a dialogue between abstraction and figuration, between chromatic richness or monochrome; dichotomies that also characterize Campano. Throughout his career, his brushstroke matures with a single determinant, that of making its way on the canvas with absolute freedom.

In the decade of the seventies, the artist creates some small pieces of a markedly constructivist nature; geometries in which colour delimits and dissolves space employing diverse materials, from cardboard to particle board or plywood, as it may be seen in *El volumen azul y amarillo* [The Blue and Yellow Volume] (1975). Along with others, this work falls within the period defined by the spatial investigations of the Grupo de Cuenca. From that time, Campano will distinguish himself with the vivacious, fiery chromatic schemes in which his trace has already gained force and his brushstroke, impetus. In the wake of this expressive approach, we come to the investigation the artist undertakes in the series "Vocales" [Vowels] (1979-1980), steeped in the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud. These works venture into a new semantic field in which the artist reflects not only on painting, but also on its significance.

At the same time, and coinciding with his stays in Paris, Campano creates large-scale works in which he reinterprets some of the great masters of French painting. Paul Cézanne and his series of paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire easily come to mind in relation to works like *El zurdo* [Left-handed] (1980), which clearly show Campano's interest in the decomposition of space through a geometrization of volumes, or to some of the representations in which

the sea is the protagonist, such as *Naufragio* [Shipwreck] (1983) or *Mar* [Sea] (1983). While in the former, we see the influence of Delacroix, perhaps also Géricault –the principal heralds of French Romanticism–, the latter initiates dialogues that bring us closer to Monet's impressionism. Although it is, above all, Poussin who awakens the admiration of the Madrid artist, particularly in the manner of understanding breaking points and innovation. Poussin's studies of the Flood lead us back to Campano's same works as well as others, such as those of the series "La Grappa" or "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz], which take us to the paintings *L'Automne* [Autumn] and *L'Été* [Summer], belonging to Poussin's *Les Quatre Saisons* [The Four Seasons].

One aspect to emphasize in Campano's work is how the artist approaches the gaze of each of the masters he has studied; how in each composition, different manners of understanding the pictorial space come together. It is not difficult to find the mark of Poussin combined with aspects that recall Cézanne. Campano sets out in search of a sort of absolute, a heterogenous source from which to approach the full sense of the significance of painting. His work encompasses tradition and vanguard, form and content, always fed by a primeval type of energy that drives him on his personal path. One of the singularities that best defines his style is precisely the acceptance of the fact that no style defines him. The impossibility of classification is one of the features that best speaks of his free, inquisitive spirit of continuous revision and investigation. Campano's work has a certain visceral quality charged with an energy that matures on impulses. While, on the one hand, he studies and analyses art history, on the other, he is well aware not only of what is happening in the pictorial, but also in the literary or musical context; and always in a flux that leads him to new plastic horizons.

At the start of the nineties, Campano's work took a turn that lead him into a progressively more abstract world

distanced from narratives. Even his interpretations of landscape synthesize to perfection the artist's ability to reduce the figure to its minimal expression.

As it occurs throughout this artist's career, works of the same period respond to other concerns. Compositions such as *SUBASH, 20.9.94* (1994) or *Sin título 4* [Untitled 4] (1991) open up to a dialogue of black and white which might be said to enclose a return to the degree zero of painting. All references "to something or someone" gradually disappear.

These works allow us to think that the painting continues beyond the limits of the canvas. They are expanding works in which the traces or figures, tending to geometric, look as though they have been cut out. Campano dissects the space, amplifies or reduces it, demonstrating absolute control of the canvas. He combines straight lines and curves, letting it be the duel of black and white that creates the pictorial tension. In an interview from the nineties, the artist confessed:

"I am very interested in the evocative power. Black and white is at the base of all painting. In the conception of a painting, there is always a moment in black and white, even if only to say: here is the empty space on the canvas and now I add something. That addition is always going to be black. [...] What interests me is that with two or three plastic elements, one can do thousands of things; there will always be a different combination, that is precisely why it is hard to come to a dead end".<sup>1</sup>

Campano's words are to be understood as a meditated reflection on space and artistic practice; it is only thus that

1. From a conversation between Miguel Ángel Campano and Santiago B. Olmo, Sóller, 1993 (published in the catalogue *Pinturas 1993*, Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid).

we can understand one of his most singular, emblematic and suggestive endeavours. With *Elias (d'après Daniel Buren)* [Eliás (after Daniel Buren)] (1996-1999), Campano adopts the wall as the canvas, projecting the expansion of his painterly gesture into the architectural space. In this installation series, he starts from the point as the minimum geometric expression, but also as the synthesis of Daniel Buren's spatial incursions: employing simple shapes, the French artist created new realities with the use of colour and an expansion of forms in space. With the almost limitless repetition of the circle/point, Campano composes and decomposes new cosmogonies based on the location of each of the points in the room's space, as it may be seen in the photographs of his first intervention in the Galería Maior, in the presentation at the "D'après" exhibition at MNCARS, or in the one at Es Baluard Museu, in which the points are what guides the viewer from the outside staircase into the exhibition hall.

In works like *Simón* (1998), or in the series "Plegaria" [Prayer] (1997), the geometrical compositions in black and white take on a new significance, creating a vibration and even making the space tremble. These works recall Malevich or Kandinsky with subtlety, particularly insofar as the capacity to generate dynamism and rhythm. The paintings approximate the idea of a musical score without a stave, as if the artist were placing notes in a space that is not governed by an external order, but by an internal one. Campano creates musicality and movement as if, with each figure, he were arranging an internal engine connected to the rest of the elements.

At the end of the nineties, the artist returns to colour and, interested in the dialectic between transparency and opacity, employs an Indian *lungí*<sup>2</sup> fabric as the support for

2. The *lungí* is a traditional garment used in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Singapore, the Horn of Africa and

painting. The reticular weave of these fabrics turns into yet another opportunity to investigate a new form of dealing with space. In fact, it is not just the fabric that leads to a new line of pictorial investigation; the artist's stay in India brings him closer to a more essentialist view of the world, which translates into a new approach to conceiving the dialogue between shapes and colours. The new visual games will be reflected in works like *Samael* (2000).

On some occasions, Campano returns to the canvas in search of new challenges based on ideas assimilated earlier. Conscious of the wealth of knowledge hidden in the great masters, he conceives reality parting from the symbols known to him, but endeavouring to reach unknown harbours. In *Brecha* [Breach] (2001) or *Brecha Y griega* [Y Breach] (2002), building on chromatic contrast, the artist lights upon a simple element that seems to introduce itself into the composition like something foreign, as if it were unexpected, not invited to take part.

The exhibition is an opportunity to explore one of the most complex and diverse bodies of work with an emphasis on the breaking points of which the artist was fully conscious.

The title itself, "Accents and Difference", points to the artist's ability to focus on breaking points and interests, on legacy and investigation, yet never ceasing to be absolutely himself. His work grows and matures with the changes and turnabouts; each composition is the fruit of many preceding reflections, of full days studying the classics while looking for spaces through which to perforate reality. Campano accents and acknowledges while he moves through and marks out the differences:

the Arabian Peninsula. It is usually worn wrapped around the waist, in a loose manner compatible with high temperatures.

"That is my way of conceiving and working on a painting. They are works that cannot be corrected, that is why one must have very clear ideas at the moment of tackling the canvas. [...] I think that this work contains the prior work. [...] There is a tension created by the forms themselves, but it is not projected from the painting into your mind, there is no message. This work moves away from a certain type of gestural painting and the thematic line that I had done. But there is a substance which is the same. [...] This is painting that appeals more to the sense of sight than to words. It does not easily lend itself to being discussed, and in that, it is quite different from the previous series, in which there were many literary elements. [...] I want to try to recognize myself in my paintings: for them to be different from other approaches, from other people who have used black and white or geometry. In this aspect, I accentuate and point out the differences".<sup>3</sup>

Reality filters through in many of his compositions, not owing to a tendency towards mimesis or interpretation, but to its very effect on the artist, to his personal state. The manner of handling it is revealed in very subtle, even antagonistic creations. This paradox is well reflected in the small sculptural pieces christened with the name of *Patrañas* [Tall Tales] (2004-2017). These works, of just over ten centimetres, are made from materials as diverse as cigarette packets and sugar cubes; they are a sort of hotchpotch, in which the artist masterfully dissects reality, making it speak with its very lack of sense. The contradiction appears when we look at works from the same period such as *Calvario*

3. From a conversation between Miguel Ángel Campano and Santiago B. Olmo, Sóller, 1993 (published in the catalogue *Pinturas 1993*, Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid).

[Calvary] (2006) or *Estío* [Summer] (2007), in which the artist erases and dissolves realities with the silence of white.

The exhibition also brings us closer to Campano's more personal side through his notebooks and sketches; materials that contain aesthetical intimacies, details that connect works that are distant in time but close in essence.

Campano's artistic career doubtlessly turns into *Campano after Campano*. Yet this should not be understood as being self-referential, but rather as a sign of integrity. His painting points to an unfiltered and unreserved truth; his approach is his emotion and thought:

“Quico Rivas Apollonian or Dionysian?

Miguel Ángel Campano Dionysian

QR Truth or beauty

MAC They're the same thing

QR Painting or music?

MAC Music

QR What is more important, size or skill?

MAC The heart”.<sup>4</sup>

4. From a conversation between Miguel Ángel Campano and Quico Rivas, Madrid, 2004 (published in the catalogue *Campano*, Galería Pelaires, Palma).

## MIGUEL ÁNGEL CAMPANO. D'APRÈS

Manuel Borja-Villel

At the start of the decade of the 1980s, coinciding with a period of profound cultural, socio-political and institutional changes in our country, a number of artists attuned to a certain international context reached notable renown in light of their firm commitment to returning the pictorial medium to the centre-stage of the art scene. This movement did not go unchallenged, given that the type of painting to which they were committed reopened the debate of the question of the autonomy of art; that is to say, the discussion of the possibility and pertinence of freeing aesthetic practices from a political and social function, to value it solely in terms of its own specificity. Nonetheless, far from being seen as the desire for a return to a classical order, these artists' defence of the pictorial as an expressive medium was conceived—and, to a certain extent, also instrumentalized—as an incarnation of a new art for the new epoch of the Spanish Transition. This art, not devoid of a certain naiveté (perhaps owing to being the fruit of a long-repressed longing), tended towards a sort of acritical internationalization, opening up towards Europe and looking out onto the future with unconflicted optimism. But under its apparent depoliticization, there lay a discomfort and an eagerness for contestation which was, ultimately, also a political stance.

Miguel Ángel Campano (Madrid, 1948 - Cercedilla, Madrid, 2018) is an artist who took part in the two exhibitions that gave focus and visibility to this emerging trend: “1980” (1979) and “Madrid D.F.: Aspectos de la nueva escena plástica madrileña” [Madrid D.F.: Aspects of the New Plastic Arts Scene in Madrid] (1980). Both exhibits advocated for what might be described as a self-sufficient and pleasurable type of painting which served and exhausted itself (or its purely

plastic referentiality, in any case), and which needed no political or theoretical-discursive grounds to legitimate itself. In Campano's case, his practice reflects the passionate relationship with painting that the artist maintained throughout his life. A career full of leaps, turns and detours that led him to travel through very diverse stylistic terrain (hence, the artist's insistence on defining his practice as "no style"), and was determined by a radical and continuous questioning of painting, even while never abandoning its practice.

That career began in the decade of the 1970s, when Campano made his earliest works: these were of small dimensions and with a marked constructivist component much indebted to the geometric abstraction exercises of several of the artists who were members of what has been referred to as *Grupo de Cuenca*. These rigorous geometrical compositions, often presented as variations, soon gave way to painting of a gestural nature, in which colour attained an increasingly greater role, and the fundamental influence that North American abstract expressionism was beginning to have in the artist's work is evident.

This gestural language pervades Campano's production beginning at the end of the 1970s and through the beginning of the following decade, as can be seen in *La vorágine. Abstracción en rojo* [The Maelstrom: Abstraction in Red] (1980) or the series to do with the poem *Voyelles* [Vowels], a sonnet in which Arthur Rimbaud associates images and colours to the sounds of vowels. Focusing on this poem marked a starting point of a complex process of investigation and painterly meta-reflection in Campano's work, manifesting the textual matrix residing in his approach to the pictorial.

The group of canvases painted in connection with that sonnet is also one of the first projects in which Campano adopted intertextuality as an artistic strategy and the series as a work methodology. Both aspects would play a fundamental role in the *d'après* works, made in the eighties, in which the artist studies and reinterprets works of the great figures of

the French history of painting such as Paul Cézanne, Eugène Delacroix or Nicolas Poussin. An approach that is at once an homage, a premise, and an exercise in deconstruction, which also served the artist to delve deeper into the configuration and expansion of his own vocabulary.

It was in Paris, the city that was his home for many years, that Campano began to develop the *d'après* works, owing to which he became interested in painting from life and in critically revisiting genres such as still life and landscape. Cézanne is key in this respect, inspiring Campano's paintings of mountains based on the works the French painter devoted to Mont Sainte-Victoire or, in a less direct manner, the series "Omphalos" (1984-1985), painted after a visit to the ruins of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, considered as the centre ("navel") of the world in antiquity.

Echoes of the profound influence of Poussin also resound in this series. Three works that were fundamental to Campano's career — "Le déluge d'après Poussin" [The Flood after Poussin] (1981-1982), "La Grappa" (1985-1986) and "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz] (1989-1992)— were born as *d'après* studies of the allegorical cycle that Poussin devoted to the four seasons at the end of his life. Works that are very different from each other, they are nonetheless closely linked by the exhaustive reinterpretation of the pictorial languages of the vanguards in which Campano explored unravelling the genealogical codes of the plastic arts and contemporary painting.

Campano's work comes into its own even more at the start of the decade of the 1990s, when not only the references to the pictorial tradition but any trace of narrativity and mimetic vocation also disappears. In that work, painted in black and white, the contrast of filled versus blank plays an especially important role. Initially, the artist uses hard forms, which gradually soften and even acquire a certain organic dimension. Employing repetitive structures, in these works approaching suprematism, Campano manages to render a rhythmic and poetic force of great intensity. An emblematic

example of this is the series “Plegaria” [Prayer] (1995-1997), with the multiple rectangular figures distributed throughout the canvas in an almost musical manner.

A very particular work should be mentioned: *Eliás (d’après Daniel Buren)* [Eliás (after Daniel Buren)] (1996-1999), a series-installation in which, starting from the point as “the minimum expression of geometry”, Campano creates a strange chromatic effect, despite employing only white, black and the untreated canvas itself. The piece is also a forceful exercise of conceptual investigation of the capacity of painting to intervene/interfere in space (hence the reference to Daniel Buren), as well as the generative capacity of repetition.

In a new turn of his career, at the end of the nineties, the artist returns to colour, adding the use of the Indian *lungi* fabric as a support, finding in its weave the possibility of exploring new expressive potentials. Also from this period are those paintings the artist makes as a consequence of his reencounter with José Guerrero, in which he evokes the “vibrant” quality of that author’s painting; Guerrero, whom Campano initially met in the seventies, has always remained among his references.

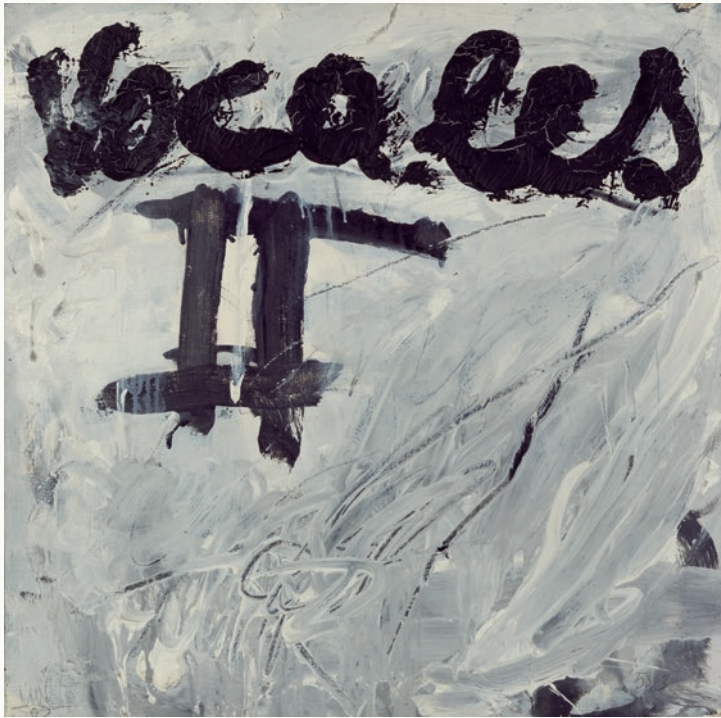
The retrospective exhibition devoted to Miguel Ángel Campano at the Museo Reina Sofía examines the principal questions and problems the artist dealt with throughout his career, showing the successive cycles and their close, although not always evident, interrelation. The exhibit strives to (ac)knowledge in a broader manner the figure and the legacy of an artist whose critical reading of painting of the past and the very pictorial medium itself led him to make new, singular and sensitive work that turned him an indispensable reference of contemporary artistic creation of our country.

This is a reprint of a text first published in 2019 in the catalogue of the exhibition “Miguel Ángel Campano. D’après” at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Miguel Ángel Campano, *Sin título (El puente II)* [Untitled (The Bridge II)], 1979. Oil, graphite and pastel on canvas, 200 × 322 cm. Fundación Juan March, Museu Fundación Juan March Collection, Palma





Miguel Ángel Campano, *Voyelles II (35)* [Vowels II (35)], 1982-1983. Oil on canvas, 49,5 × 40 cm. Private Collection



Miguel Ángel Campano, *Naufragio* [Shipwreck], 1983. Oil on canvas, 200 × 220 cm. Private Collection



Miguel Ángel Campano, *La Grappa XXXVIII*, 1986.  
Oil on canvas, 202 × 294 cm. “la Caixa” Collection.  
Contemporary Art.



Miguel Ángel Campano, *Elias (d'après Daniel Buren)*  
[*Eliás (after Daniel Buren)*], 1996-1999. Oil on canvas,  
dimensions variable. Galeria Maior



Javier Campano, *Las Patrañas de Miguel Ángel Campano*, [Miguel Ángel Campano's Tall Tales] 2018-2019 (patraña 74) [Tall Tale 74]. Digital print, 30,2 × 40,5 cm. Ed. 3/photograph. El Instante Fundación

## IN CONVERSATION WITH MIGUEL ÁNGEL CAMPANO

Santiago B. Olmo

Miguel Ángel Campano's latest painting breaks with the approach and the methods of his immediately preceding work, the series "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz], which took Poussin's *L'Été* [Summer] as the point of departure.

In the artist's studio, we speak of radicality. The minimal means to reach the maximum effect. No gimmicks, painting is presented raw, undressed.

SBO How do you tackle black on white? There, the specific, figurative differences, the clues disappear. The canvas is approached in a new and different manner...

MAC In the past, there were things that I wanted to do and yet, they did not fit into what I was working on; now everything fits. In "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz], everything was very delimited.

In a certain way, all these works emerged in my consciousness in the development of the prior series: with very sparse pictorial means, I could define a figure or an element of Poussin's painting. After the process, a figure of Poussin's became practically unrecognizable as such. It was merely a remnant, a vestige.

This was the starting point: it is possible to evoke something real or objective without using mimetic means, employing precisely the abstract elements to suggest specific things.

In "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz], there was an approach that had never completely convinced me, and it was that of starting from something pictorial to transform it, but after the process, it was still pictorial. Painting is always painting, and it is possible to evoke without copying.

SBO Is there an originating impulse in the "black on white"?

<sup>MAC</sup> In a certain manner, it is the most immediate, but why can't it happen with another colour? Black always seems more cerebral, black does not exist in the reality, and it seems to convey things that are more spiritual than material.

For me, black is the fundamental colour, it is the line.

<sup>SBO</sup> You had used black and white in the past, as well...

<sup>MAC</sup> I am very interested in the evocative power. Black and white is at the base of all painting. In the conception of a painting, there is always a moment in black and white, even if only to say: here is the empty space on the canvas and now I add something. That addition is always going to be black.

<sup>SBO</sup> There is a catalogue of shapes, simple and composed shapes. This is very evident in the latest paintings, in which isolated shapes appear framed in a white background...

<sup>MAC</sup> What interests me is that with two or three plastic elements, one can do thousands of things; there will always be a different combination, that is precisely why it is hard to come to a dead end.

<sup>SBO</sup> In the last few years, you have worked on fairly compact series, and starting from a series, you have progressively occupied spaces. Would you describe this work as a series or as a broader creative moment?

<sup>MAC</sup> I do not think it is a closed series but, rather, five or six at once. On the other hand, there is a focusing of attention in a series with very concrete problems.

There is an aspect on which I am not working specifically right now, the relation of a painting with a sculpture. It is about how to go from a canvas to a volume, or vice versa. From that vantage point, paintings may seem more comprehensible, each canvas can be a solid body, possessing a volume that can be cut. I do not know if it would be an

exaggeration, in many cases, to say that this is about sculpted paintings, a sculpture of space owing to its own volume, in a painting there is an atmosphere... That is why these paintings are like a flat sculpture. I believe to have arrived at this idea because I am very interested in sculpture. I do not think I have a sculptor's temperament, but I have embarked on this in a practical manner. I do not feel too far from Brancusi. Not owing to the simplicity but, rather, to the impulse that tends towards the primeval, towards the primitive.

<sup>SBO</sup> It is curious that in "Ruth y Booz" [Ruth and Boaz], there was an analysis of styles, of expressive forms and repertoires; here there is none of that, the black is so naked that it ends up being an incision.

<sup>MAC</sup> There is certainly nothing external from which to start, although I am aware that what I am painting is what surrounds me. There is also a tradition of people who have painted in black and white.

<sup>SBO</sup> Yes, the fifties, Franz Kline, Soulages... But in your paintings, there is no gestural...

<sup>MAC</sup> I would rather speak of the expressiveness of the gestural: every time I lay on paint, there is a leakage that I then extend, it's very quick, but one must be careful with the finish.

<sup>SBO</sup> All these paintings have a very systematized correlation in works on paper; there are countless proofs that then pass into different dimensions.

<sup>MAC</sup> That is my way of conceiving and working on a painting. They are works that cannot be corrected, that is why one must have very clear ideas at the moment of tackling the canvas.

<sup>SBO</sup> How does this latest work relate to your prior work?

<sup>MAC</sup> I think that this work contains the prior work. Years ago, this could have been planned, but in a very conceptual manner. Now, however, it comes about after a very complex

process of abstractions and simplifications of forms and structures. In my previous work, the triangles, the lines, the circles were purely mechanisms, tools of analysis. Now they are the only thing that remains, the content is my experience as a painter; it steers clear of dramatic painting.

There is a tension created by the forms themselves, but it is not projected from the painting into your mind, there is no message. This work moves away from a certain type of gestural painting and the thematic line that I had done. But there is a substance which is the same. I have eliminated references that were very present in the previous work, such as Cézanne or Poussin.

This is painting that appeals more to the sense of sight than to words. It does not easily lend itself to being discussed, and in that, it is quite different from the previous series, in which there were many literary elements.

I want to try to recognize myself in my paintings: for them to be different from other approaches, from other people who have used black and white or geometry. In this aspect, I accentuate and point out the differences.

<sup>SBO</sup> There are certain paintings in which it seems that there is an amplification of small parts or details of earlier paintings. There is an intention of a dialogue with your own painting.

<sup>MAC</sup> At a certain time, I realized that in enlarging some details, the result was something very different from Poussin's model that I was copying; the detail lost its identity, there were figures that, on the basis of an analytical process, generated abstract forms that were impossible to identify.

<sup>SBO</sup> Works on paper are a very significant and much cared for aspect of your work. How are they related to the canvases?

<sup>MAC</sup> I think the collages are like a diary, there is no clear intention of creating something specific. On the other hand, that never happens in painting. Paper does not produce

a feeling of fear. In the canvases, however, there are difficulties or blockages.

On paper, chance comes into it while in the paintings that happens very rarely. Paintings are almost always decisions; one always knows what one wants to say and do.

On paper, I often find lines that can go into a painting, but that would not happen without this prior experimentation. Certain works on paper from last year gave rise to the possibility of making these canvases, although I had already had the idea of making very radical paintings a long time ago. In the papers, there were large empty spaces, which did not happen in paintings. There is a paper work in which there are two black right angles; it led me to make paintings like these latest.

<sup>SBO</sup> In the works on paper, especially in those of large size, there is an extraordinary wealth of means, which contrasts with the paintings...

<sup>MAC</sup> To begin with, I tried to do the same thing on canvas as on paper, but the process was quite different, and that was not possible. Accepting the canvas for what it is, with larger dimensions, more rigid, etc., one can do something parallel, but certainly not arriving at the same results. To approach many of the paintings, I even do larger papers, sketches, I glue onto the paper parts from others, so that I can have a prior and approximate view of the result. There are paintings I have done in twenty minutes, but their process of preparation was very long, based on drawings, collages, sketches...

I think it was Ryman—in whose paintings, particularly the last ones, there is practically nothing, their appearance is absolutely naked—who said that the appearance has nothing to do with the reality. A painting of an easy appearance takes me months of work. The virtue of painting is that it looks very easy, the easier it looks the more complexity it encloses, the more dedication, zeal, commitment... I think he also said that what you reject acquires a stronger presence.

SBO I do not think that these works have much to do with minimalism.

MAC There is a certain mystique of a stripping away that can have much to do with Ellsworth Kelly, with the minimalists, with Malevich, and it is something that I like and that stimulates me.

At the beginning of my career, I was immersed in a geometrical world, I made wooden constructions, works that are like bricolage integrating many materials, steel, plastic. There was very little painting and a lot of assemblage. Rather than paintings, I made simulacra of paintings. With the [series] "Vowels", there came a radical break which brought a reassertion of my wish to be a painter. For example, with Ellsworth Kelly's work, one does not know whether it is painting or not; but in the case of gestural painters, it is perfectly clear that it is painting. That is why there is nothing strange in that I sought a path that would make things easier, without figures or representation.

SBO Perhaps that is why these works are so typically you.

MAC Yes, I identify with them very much. In the last ten years, I was very conscious of going deeper into myself, which is going deeper into style. I think that we might speak of metamorphosis rather than changes.

I see it as an attempt; you go through life picking things up, you load up on them, memories, stories, things you find and keep. All of a sudden, you are very burdened, and you say: "I want to travel light", you throw them out and continue on. You cannot go on with that burden because you suffocate, you drown... There is the intention of freeing myself of ballast, too.

This is a reprint of the conversation between Miguel Ángel Campano and Santiago B. Olmo, which took place in Sóller in 1993, and was first published in the catalogue of the exhibition "Pinturas 1993" [Paintings, 1993] at the Galería Juana de Aizpuru, in Madrid.

*Accents and Difference*  
Miguel Ángel Campano

From 18th September 2020  
to 28th February 2021

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Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani de Palma in collaboration with Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, based on the exhibition "Miguel Ángel Campano. D'après"

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