

Susan Nash. Changing Skins

Javier Hernando Carrasco

The temptation of the object is felt by this artist with intensity. On one hand, as part of the surrealist tradition of the "objet trouvé"; on the other, in line with the pictorial sense given it by Pop Art. But in the work of Susan Nash these two tendencies are made to coincide, because the traces left by time, the physical erosion suffered by the object, which is at the same time a transposition of that suffered by its previous users, is eliminated by means of a new covering resulting from pictorial intervention, whilst its structure remains unchanged – I would go as far as to say, is reaffirmed – as if volumetrics, accentuation of its silhouette, in other words reaffirmation of its unity, have supplanted the definition of its details. Fixing the image once and for all. On the other hand, the tridimensionality of the object by no means takes away from its pictorial quality. This is not, however, ironic integration, as in the case of Bertrand Lavier, but chromatic transformation in order to convert the object into a metaphorical support: *The Heart Rules*; *Vanity Fair*; *Stromboli*; *Home, Sweet Home...* The worn-out object as support for transposition of the pictorial dimension.

Susan Nash restores damaged objects through a process that would be considered aberrant if applied to works of art, transforming their skin and thus their original meanings. The object nevertheless dominates; the power of its physiognomy, which the artist does not dare to modify, even in the case of certain small adherences, remains intact. And it is to a large extent its formal definition which decides the chromatic treatment, for it not only imposes its own peculiar architecture on the new art object, but even determines the pictorial treatment. Thus, in works such as *The Brothers*, the artist simply emphasizes the compartments by means of a single, almost flat colour, whilst *Diver* calls for expressive brushwork, and *The Heart Rules* establishes a friendly dialogue between geometry and expression. In this way, Susan Nash carries out a very intense transformation of the object for, beyond its decontextualization and the attribution of new meaning, the pictorial recycling literally wipes out every vestige of the past except its volumetric definition. The object is first salvaged but, after being subjected to the process of transformation described above, it has become a different visual artefact, has been literally transfigured. The signs of its previous existence have been cancelled out, since they were visible in the marks on its skin.

These alterations imply certain transpositions: from functional object to art work, from austerity to exuberance, from functional and formal obsolescence to expressive life in the present, ultimately supplanting the object, in that its earlier meaning and character have been cancelled. The object is sacrificed to its own aesthetic-conceptual reconstitution. Behind that window blind we now sense the banality of contemporary life; in that pair of box-columns, two brothers of unremitting physical and perhaps also spiritual inflexibility; behind that burst of parallel lines in *The Heart Rules*, two different emotional states, etcetera. The structural physiognomy of each found object guides the artist in her representation of different situations that form part of her experience. Life touches art.