

## CRISTÓBAL TORAL, BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

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Art critique involves routines, the steps that critics follow when they speak or write. Although they often seem to follow winding roads, those steps are tricks to save time that usually lead too quickly from confusion to reasonable conclusions. For example, when one views the apples that the Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte painted, that vision quickly provides an explanation of the apples that float in certain Cristóbal Toral's paintings.

Let me remind you, in order to prove my point, of a painting by Magritte called *L'Idee* (*The Idea*) (1966). Even though it is a portrait of a known type, it also displays some specific features. There is nothing on top of the jacket, the tie and the shirt: no neck, no head. Instead, there is a large apple floating there. *La Grande Guerre* (*The Great War*) (1964) is a similar image, but with variations. Here, Magritte includes the neck and the head of the individual, and has provided this one with a bowler hat. We see again a floating apple, this time placed to hide the features of the face, to make it anonymous. Then (not in time, but in the logic of Magritte's dominant idea) *Golconda* (1953) appears. This painting depicts a melancholy row of houses, presumably from Belgium. In the windows, all curtains are drawn. The blue air seems absolutely motionless where rows of men wearing bowler hats are falling (or ascending) in a precise distribution of equal spaces. They are who float now, not Magritte's apples, and the critic reviewing Toral finds an almost irresistible opportunity to make a simple equation: as Magritte's men equate to his floating apples, Toral's floating apples equate to Magritte's men.

To solve this equation, travelling from Magritte's northern Europe to Toral's southern Europe is required. The border that separates the Belgian surrealism, and its oppressive atmosphere of calculation, from the realm of Spanish realism, where subtle feelings provide air and light with density, must be crossed somehow. This is an entertained itinerary that, even if it does not lead to any specific place, has the virtue of establishing the type of connections that art critics like.

It is therefore reassuring, as we are maintained without any risk within the limits of the XX century. In a certain sense, Toral is a fully contemporary artist; however, a difficulty arises as soon as this statement is made.