

Antonio López & Tusquets in dialogue



El metódico pintor Antonio López (Tomelloso, 1936) y el polifacético arquitecto Oscar Tusquets (Barcelona, 1941) demuestran una admiración mutua que con los años ha dado pie a una larga amistad.

The methodical painter Antonio López (Tomelloso, 1936) and the multifaceted architect Oscar Tusquets (Barcelona, 1941) reflect mutual admiration that over the years has led to a long friendship.

ALG: A mí esa insistencia, ese estar en su espacio, en su patria, me parece grande.

OTB: Yo lo que quería hablar contigo, porque creía que tocaba un tema de arquitectura, es la ventana. Tú dijiste en algún momento de tus entrevistas que echabas en falta la ventana en la arquitectura moderna. El muro cortina, que es un invento nórdico, saca al arquitecto de una de las cosas más difíciles, que es proporcionar una fachada. Saber abrir los huecos. Si es toda de vidrio, te has ahorrado el problema. Pero pierde todo el misterio que encierra la ventana... Sobre todo si el muro es grueso. Todos los cuadros que se han hecho desde Caspar David Friedrich de una mujer mirando por una ventana...

ALG: La ventana tiene mucha presencia, pero veremos a ver qué presencia va a tener el muro cortina en el arte. Hay que esperar: primero se hace la casa y después llega el pintor y vive en la casa, a ver qué sale de esa relación.

OTB: La ventana ofrece dos posibilidades: la de estar mirando desde dentro hacia afuera, cosa que tienes en tus cuadros —yo recuerdo un paisaje nocturno de Madrid desde un cuarto de baño, que esto es muy tuyo—.

Antonio López welcomes his friend Oscar Tusquets to his home in Madrid, a visit during which they talked about concerns common to painting and architecture, from the passage of time to the disappearance of the window in modern architecture.

Oscar Tusquets Blanca: Very recently, your daughter posted a vase with white roses that read 'from 25,' so it must be very recent. It's infuriating, Antonio, how good you are. White roses on a white background. And I can see that you're more interested in what's inside the vase, what's at the bottom with the slightly stained water.

Antonio López García: Flowers can't always reach where you want them to, because it depends on how long they last.

OTB: You're painting decaying flowers.

ALG: Drawing and painting. Above all, I paint the process of the flower from its initial beauty, fragrant and fresh, to its extinction. Yes, I like that. The beauty of destruction.

OTB: I admire you very much and I like to argue with you. Last time it was about Titian's late period, which I like: he is going blind and paints with his hands. You told me I was completely wrong.

ALG: Not wrong, but he reached his nineties. And I imagine he lost sight. This is not Velázquez's conscious process. Velázquez doesn't paint The Spinners the way he paints it because he has lost his sight, but because he wants to go in that direction. With Titian, you can tell that he had lost his sight. You notice that. Sometimes it looks very sloppy, but his talent, his mastery, his skill, and so many years of work, save him. But you can tell.

OTB: But before we talked about Titian, we discussed the Italian artist Morandi, whom

"The curtain wall relieves the architect of one of the hardest tasks: to provide a facade"

we both like very much. I dared to say that a monographic didn't do him justice, because there were already two blue bottles with a white one, and then the same bottles in a slightly different arrangement. You got mad and said to me: "A hero. Morandi is a hero." Do you remember?

ALG: I think that insistence, that being in his space, in his homeland, is great.

OTB: What I wanted to talk to you about, because I thought it touched on an architectural topic, is the window. You said at some point in your interviews that you missed the window in modern architecture. The curtain wall, which is a Nordic invention, relieves the architect of one of the hardest tasks, which is to provide a facade. Knowing how to open the gaps. If it's all glass, you avoid the problem. But you lose all the mystery that the window holds... Especially if the wall is thick. All the paintings that have been done since Caspar David Friedrich of a woman looking out of a window...

ALG: The window has a strong presence, but we'll see what presence the curtain wall will have in art. We'll have to wait and see: first the house is built, then the painter arrives and lives in the house, and we'll see what comes out of that relationship.

OTB: The window offers two possibilities: looking out from the inside, which you have in your paintings – I remember a nighttime landscape of Madrid from a bathroom, which is very typical of you.

ALG: That window really fascinated me. It was the bathroom window in our house on



Plaza de la Infancia. It was a new house; we were the first to live there. I was impressed by how new it was, and the window wasn't new, but everything else was. I painted it during the daytime, at night, at sunset... That hole to the outside inspired me greatly. Paco (López) has painted windows. Maribel (Quintanilla) has painted windows. The window has been an important theme because it condenses the outside with the inside. Dalí already had that.

OTB: Exactly, and this is a loss. An irreparable loss. Le Corbusier's nonsense with the horizontal window... it was a law: the window had to be horizontal because it was structurally possible. Well, so what? Let it be impossible.

ALG: But, Oscar, architecture isn't made for painters to paint. It's made for living. For living in accordance with certain aesthetics. The painter has to see that and decide if it is interesting and how. I think anything can be done. I don't think Madrid is a beautiful city, but it's very interesting to paint.

OTB: But architects intend for it not to be seen. The window has disappeared. Before, it had exterior blinds, glass, interior shutters, sheer curtains, and opaque curtains: five filters. Now we want to go from five filters to none. Modern architecture is really bad.

ALG: I've never painted the window you describe. I've painted the window with the bare opening, without shutters, without curtains, without anything. Because that's what was in the house.

OTB: There are several very beautiful paintings by Dalí, with his sister looking out the window. And then there's Hopper, who looks in from the outside, spying through the window. And Hitchcock?

ALG: Exactly. What's going on inside? There's a woman working in an office with her boss. If you see the woman's rear, for example, fantastic. But the credit doesn't go to the architect, it goes to the painter. When there's no window, the painter will see something.

OTB: A building without windows is an impoverishment.

ALG: Don't tell me that. Maybe I wouldn't live there, but I would paint it. The window is the summary of life. We have reached the era of the non-window. But I think that everything is paintable, poeticizable, worthy of everything.

OTB: You started painting things that people didn't consider beautiful. That's to your credit.

ALG: But things have never been painted because they are beautiful. Vermeer painted Delft not because it was beautiful, but because he was there. There are no maps in my



house. I haven't seen maps in my friends' houses. But in Vermeer's time there were maps, and they spoke of travel.

OTB: Don't give me that... It's a composition. Well, this is what you and I have been talking about for many years. I say: if I'm painting a city and there's a window that's wrongly placed, I correct it.

ALG: I don't correct it. Do you think Velázquez would have corrected Philip IV's chin?

OTB: It has been proven that the door in the backdrop of Las Meninas could not have been where it is. So Velázquez composes, and that's why the door leaf is painted incorrectly.

ALG: So what? It's one thing to compose and another to make things up. Velázquez works with the material he has at hand. That's why he's Velázquez and not Ingres. Spanish art is wonderful. How it is born parallel to life: this is unique.

"Architecture isn't made for painters to paint. It's made for living"

OTB: I criticize you on one thing: you are wrong about perspective. I have a chapter in my latest book dedicated to proving it.

ALG: How this red iron bar is one thing, and how we see it is another. It is straight, but the eye sees it as curved because it takes up so much space.

OTB: But when you look at the painting and move around, you see the bar as curved

when it is straight. And that is a mistake. On the side of The School of Athens there is a sphere. According to your theory, it would be a spheroid, not a sphere.

ALG: But the way a person looks at it now is not the same as in Raphael's time. Raphael knew only one perspective: that of a single point. Velázquez didn't go beyond that either. He incorporated other things, but not in relation to perspective.

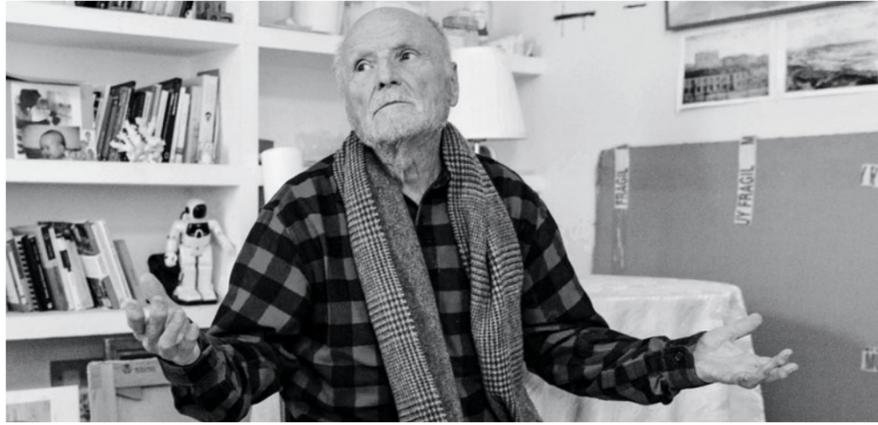
OTB: But your paintings also have a single vanishing point.

ALG: They have more than one. If I paint your portrait, there is the one that goes to the horizon and the one that goes to the ground. And that's already two.

OTB: But you mark the point of view. You don't move.

ALG: I don't change it. Once I've decided on the location, it's always in the same place. I put up signs. When Dalí shows someone looking out of a window, he doesn't use modern perspective. I want to simplify things, so I paint what I see. If it's curved, I paint it curved. I don't care if people argue about it. When I started curving things, I thought it scandalous, and it took me a while to accept it, but all the shapes coincided. Curves are created when you cover a lot of space. Vermeer covers little. But in Las Meninas, the eye couldn't see it that way without distortion. It's almost impossible.

OTB: I'll send you that article, which argues how Las Meninas was painted. Miguel Usandizaga, a professor of architecture, has scanned a small painting from a British collec-



ALG: Esa ventana me sugestionaba muchísimo. Era la del baño de nuestra casa en la Plaza de la Infancia. Era una casa nueva, la estrenamos nosotros. Me impresionaba lo nuevo del lugar, y la ventana no era nueva, pero todo lo demás sí. La pinté de día, de noche, al atardecer... Ese agujero al exterior me sugestionaba muchísimo. Paco (López) ha pintado ventanas. Maribel (Quintanilla) ha pintado ventanas. La ventana ha sido un tema importante porque condensa el exterior con el interior. Eso ya Dalí lo tiene.

OTB: Exacto, y esto es una pérdida. Una pérdida irreparable. La tontería de Le Corbusier con la ventana horizontal... era una ley: había que hacer la ventana horizontal porque estructuralmente era posible. Bueno, ¿y qué? Que sea imposible.

ALG: Pero, Oscar, la arquitectura no se hace para que la pinten los pintores, se hace para vivir. Para vivir de acuerdo con unas estéticas. El pintor tiene que ver eso y decidir si le interesa y cómo. Yo pienso que todo se puede hacer. A mí Madrid no me parece una ciudad hermosa, pero para pintarla es interesantísima.

OTB: Pero lo que los arquitectos pretenden es que no se vea. La ventana ha desaparecido. Antes tenía persianas exteriores, vidrios, postigos interiores, visillos y cortina opaca: cinco filtros. Ahora pretendemos pasar de cinco filtros a ninguno. La arquitectura moderna es muy mala.

ALG: Esa ventana que describes yo no la he pintado nunca. Yo he pintado la ventana con el hueco pelado, sin contraventanas, sin visillos, sin nada. Porque era lo que había en casa.

OTB: Hay varios cuadros muy bonitos de Dalí, con su hermana mirando por la

ventana. Y después está Hopper, que mira desde fuera hacia adentro, el espiar por la ventana. ¿Y Hitchcock?

ALG: Exacto. ¿Qué pasa dentro? Hay una señora trabajando en una oficina con su jefe. Si ves el culo de la señora, por ejemplo, fantástico. Pero el mérito no es del arquitecto, es del pintor. Cuando no hay ventana, el pintor ya verá algo.

OTB: Un edificio sin ventanas es un embobrecimiento.

ALG: A mí eso no me lo digas. A lo mejor yo no viviría ahí, pero lo pintaría. La ventana es el resumen de la vida. Hemos alcanzado la época de la no ventana. Pero pienso que todo es pintable, poetizable, digno de todo.

OTB: Tú empezaste a pintar cosas que la gente no consideraba bonitas. Es tu mérito.

«La arquitectura no se hace para que la pinten los pintores, se hace para vivir»

ALG: Pero nunca se han pintado las cosas porque son bonitas. Vermeer pintó Delft no porque fuera bonita, sino porque él estaba allí. En mi casa no hay mapas. No he visto mapas en las casas de mis amigos. Pero en la época de Vermeer hay mapas, y hablan de viajes.

OTB: No me fastidies, hombre. Está compuesto. Bueno, esto es lo que tú y yo hablamos desde hace muchísimos años. Yo digo: si estoy pintando una ciudad y hay una ventana mal puesta, la corrijo.

ALG: Yo no la corrijo. ¿Tú crees que Velázquez iba a corregir la barbilla de Felipe IV?

OTB: Está demostrado que la puerta del

fondo de *Las Meninas* no podía estar donde está. Entonces Velázquez compone, y por eso la hoja de la puerta está mal pintada.

ALG: ¿Y qué más da? Una cosa es componer y otra inventarse las cosas. Velázquez trabaja con la materia que tiene. Por eso es Velázquez y no Ingres. El arte español es una maravilla. Cómo nace paralelo a la vida: único.

OTB: Yo a ti te critico en una cosa: en la perspectiva te equivocas. Tengo un capítulo en mi último libro dedicado a demostrarlo.

ALG: Una cosa es cómo es esta barra de hierro roja y otra cómo la vemos. Es recta, pero el ojo la ve curva porque abarca tanto espacio.

OTB: Pero cuando tú ves el cuadro y te mueves, ves la barra curva cuando es recta. Y esto es un error. En el lateral de *La escuela de Atenas* hay una esfera. Según tu teoría sería un esferoide, no una esfera.

ALG: Pero no es igual la mirada de una persona de ahora que la de la época de Rafael. Rafael conocía solo una perspectiva: la de un punto. Velázquez tampoco pasó de ahí. Incorporó cosas, pero no en relación con la perspectiva.

OTB: Pero tus cuadros también tienen un solo punto de fuga.

ALG: Tienen más de uno. Si te hago un retrato, hay el que va al horizonte y el que va al suelo. Y ya son dos.

OTB: Pero tú marcas el punto de vista. No te mueves.

ALG: No lo cambio. Una vez decidido el sitio, siempre en el mismo lugar. Pongo señales. Dalí, cuando hace asomar a la ventana, no emplea la perspectiva moderna. Yo quiero simplificar y pinto como lo veo. Que se curva, lo pinto curvo. No me importa que lo discutan. Cuando empecé a curvar

tion and says it is a preliminary study. That it was a prototype for the large painting.

ALG: No, it's a terrible painting. It was done after *Las Meninas*. He has no idea. He doesn't know anything about painting. It's so poorly painted that it's impossible.

OTB: It was painted using a camera obscura. I'm absolutely sure.

ALG: Oh, that's crazy. I think it was painted on site, with the real people. From an Italianate perspective, not a modern one. If you sent a photographer to capture that scene, it would be crazy to try to capture all of that without distortion. Velázquez did enough. But that painting is not a sketch for *Las Meninas*.

OTB: It's been proven beyond doubt. There's an edge that's lost beneath the dog, which is in the small painting but not in the large one. Vermeer also worked with a camera obscura, as Hockney proves. Canaletto worked with it too. I'm not saying this as a criticism.

ALG: But Hockney is very cheeky. He painted from photographs and wanted Vermeer to paint like him. So what if he used a camera obscura? Paint a Vermeer. All the painters of his generation paint the same thing, but Vermeer is unique. There's a huge difference between Canaletto and Vermeer. What use was the camera obscura to Canaletto if he lived there? It makes me angry when people say

that about Vermeer because it belittles him.

OTB: No, he used a resource to outline.

ALG: Maybe, but not to outline: that is easy. A fine arts student with some skill can outline. It might be useful to cut the scenes, to see what the real world is like there and say, "I have to repeat this by painting it." I think it was an inspiration, but not something he used to paint because, hey, look, is the camera obscura going to draw the picture for you? Take Pope Innocent X, set up the camera obscura, and paint him. Let's see if you can produce that painting. Right now, photography is fantastic, but painting is still superior. The wonderful thing is what you leave of yourself. That's art.



las cosas me resultaba escandaloso, tardé en aceptarlo, pero coincidieron todas las formas. Las curvas se crean cuando abarcas mucho espacio. Vermeer abarca poco. Pero en Las Meninas, el ojo no lo podía ver así sin deformación. Es casi imposible.

OTB: Te enviaré ese artículo, en el que se argumenta cómo se pintaron Las Meninas. Miguel Usandizaga, un catedrático de arquitectura ha escaneado el cuadro pequeño que está en una colección británica y dice que es un previo. Que era un prototipo para hacer el cuadro grande.

ALG: No, es un cuadro malísimo. Eso está hecho posterior a Las Meninas. No tiene ni idea. No sabe de pintura. Está tan mal pintado que es imposible.

OTB: Está pintado con cámara oscura. Segurísimo.

ALG: Ay, qué locura. Yo creo que está pintado dentro del sitio, con las personas reales. Desde una concepción italianizante, no moderna. Si mandases a un fotógrafo a hacer esa escena sería una locura abarcar todo eso sin deformación. Ya bastante hizo Velázquez. Pero ese cuadro no es el boceto de Las Meninas.

OTB: Está demostradísimo. Tiene una arista que se pierde por debajo del perro y que está en el cuadro pequeño y no en el grande. Vermeer también trabajaba con cámara oscura, lo demuestra Hockney. También Canaletto pintaba con cámara oscura. No lo digo como crítica.

ALG: Pero Hockney tiene mucha cara. Pintaba de fotografía y quería que Vermeer pintara como él. ¿Y qué si usara cámara oscura? Pinta un Vermeer. Todos los pintores de su generación pintan lo mismo, pero Vermeer es único. Hay una diferencia enorme entre Canaletto y Vermeer. De qué le valía la cámara oscura a Canaletto si vivía allí. Me da coraje que digan eso de Vermeer porque es rebajarle.

OTB: No, utilizaba un recurso para encajar.

ALG: Podría ser, pero no para encajar: encajar es fácil. Encajar lo hace un estudiante de Bellas Artes, un poco hábil. Lo encaja. Le valdría a lo mejor para cortar las escenas, para verlo, para ver cómo es el mundo real allí y decir esto lo tengo que repetir pintándolo. Yo pienso que fue una inspiración, pero no que le sirviera para pintar porque oye, mira, ¿el cuadro te lo va a dibujar la cámara oscura? Tú coge al Papa Inocencio X y pon la cámara oscura y pinta. A ver si te sale ese cuadro. Ahora mismo la fotografía está fantástica, pero la pintura actual sigue siendo superior. Lo maravilloso es lo que dejas de ti. Eso es el arte.

