

ABSTRACT

Víctor Manuel Hernández Castillo.

The imaginary construction in the proposal of figurative hybridization in two series of prints:

*Linocut series : “ Henchmen and Scavengers ”.
Everyday mythographies; A series of etchings
“ Quo- Vadis - moving archetypes ”.*

Ph.D Thesis written under the supervision of the promoter Professor Mariusz Palka.

Katowice 2022.

S

**LINOCUT
SERIES:
“HENCHMEN
AND
SCAVENGERS”.
THE
MYTHOGRAPHIES
OF EVERYDAY
LIFE.**

Introduction

Why create black and white linocut?

Linocut, as a relief printing technique, is a graphic activity with a materially subtractive decision closely related to emotional states expressed through its inherent basic elements of construction: lines and spots on a material subtraction. The use of these elements allows to obtain two-dimensional light activity, structures and precisely organizes the language, providing interpretation of the world through narrative events and imaginary figurations.

I have been developing this technique in a large format as a means of autonomous expression since 2001, drawing on its characteristics and own resources. This technique is constituted as a potentially experimental and propositional discipline in the context of contemporary graphic art.

The creative process inherent in relief printing allows me to materialize the intentionality of thematic expression along with the spontaneity of mental states. I do this through figurative searches, irreversible decisions at the moment of cutting and depleting the surface of linoleum, discovering metaphorical fugues to imaginary worlds marked by sarcastic humor.

Therefore, the linocut provides me with technical resources indispensable to present a physical-emotional discharge, which allow me to create many different configurations. They are not only subject to thought processes aimed at the form of constructive strategies but also, at the same time, they are grounded in emotive intuition.

A linocut engraving understood as a Multiple Original, duly numbered, entitled and dated by the author, is considered an innovative and artistically authentic product. It is a mirror image of the matrix plate, which through the printing process miraculously presents Baroque images resulting from intentionality which is articulated in engraving in shades of gray, black resources and the use of white surfaces.

The printing of linoleum plates in black and white is subordinated to the expressive need to open an achromatic palette in accordance with the selected theme.

Creative explorations turn to the white and black palettes, trying to link analogies between visual lines producing textures with intertwining white and black spots or vice versa, as well as their respective chromatic temperatures. As a result, eloquent palettes of warm and cold graphic forms within the linocut language are obtained, printed in white and black.

A diary of the creative process:

From the preliminary drawing (conceivable anticipation) to the line: the engraving on the relief (imaginary configuration).

The initial help, which is a drawing sketch, sometimes made with a white pencil on the black surface of linoleum, sometimes with a black pencil on the natural color of the plate, is aimed at a primal and emotional expressive suggestion. It is the result of the relationship between automatic drawing and the activation of intellectual exploration and the exploration of imagination through linear calligraphic sketches.

The zealous and intuitive activity of mental-imaginative improvement through linear engraving is subordinated to defigurative intentionality. For these purposes, anticipating what is conceivable, through drawing in white or black on a plate of linoleum, finds significant support in the form of structural suggestion of hybrid figures or figures and their spatial context. This process is a preliminary stage towards the consolidation of the figurative idea through sketching and definitive and irreversible cutting of the linoleum surface.

It is from this second moment of the creative process that it is possible to obtain expressive modifications in the initial drawing, which construct figurative images in a definitive way through actions with a gravure chisel.

Under certain circumstances it may happen that the initial drawing becomes the target due to its properties: freshness and spontaneity of its structurally open and suggestive character, as well as by its active attributes of calligraphic-non-verbal engraving, which serve literally as a script for graphic interpretation by drawing-engraving on the relief.

The physical act of engraving, which removes the matter of linoleum from the surface, presents in my action the perspective of emotional discharge during which various ways of graphic texturing, primarily linear, through cuts are discovered and improvised, establishing a dialogue with different repertoires of tools to be used.

The stripping of linoleum, which creates articulated reliefs within a set of black lines on white backgrounds and vice versa, white spaces on black backgrounds and their counterparts, corresponds to the manufacture of anthropozoomorphic hybridizations of a grotesque nature, depicting figurative events of destruction and disorder of coexistence.

Thus, the acquired visual language contained in the original engravings of linocut, the final product of this process with two creative moments, is perceived as an objectivization of imagination on a two-dimensional plane.

Imagination is a creative and intuitive act, a result of the effort of mental work. Thanks to it, I manage to construct “in my head” compositions that consolidate in a permanent and definitive way through the act of engraving, which I call the process of configurative linocutting.

During the process of creating a relief print there are undoubtedly various feelings and emotions that subjectively affect the expressive treatment of figurative compositions. Of course, they must be combined with a thematic script, as well as with memories and experiences that translate into visual ideas taken from the context of everyday life. The role of intuition is constituted in the form of an outlined engraving exploring a parallel projection order in the act of imagination.

With regard to this genesis, at the second moment and at the time of creating the relief print, I try to recreate and constructively accept the originally imagined reality. I do this through the preliminary drawing, producing figurative icons of modern man with his narrative interactions that metaphorize the contradictions in his changing behaviors, as well as his opaque interpersonal and social relationships.

The imaginary construction in the proposal of figurative hybridization in the series of linocuts: “Henchmen and Scavengers”. Mythographies of everyday life.

Even if the everyday perception of the world creates an imaginary reality with the help of graphic representations, it is capable of arranging analogies from the metaphorical order. What is at stake here is, on the one hand, his unquestionable intellectual and technological development and, on the other, his impoverished spirituality which reduces him in an irrational way to the desire to dominate another human being.

In this way, the graphically imagined representation has its empirical genesis in the everyday perception of reality. The linocut intervention on conceivable ideas previously drawn on the plate provides and ultimately outlines in a permanent and irreversible way the structure and form for the imaginary structure. This is how an original and definitive matrix is created, susceptible to black and white printing on three-hundred-gram one hundred percent cotton Belgian paper called “hannemuller”.

This twelve linocut project on the henchman and scavengers explores these two stages of figurative studies that are progressively structured: from the first associations of forms that occur under the additional interaction of the texture of the lines sketched on linoleum (the psychomotor act of drawing of what is conceivable) to the subsequent adaptation of the idea to the form in an imaginary figurative configuration by means of relief engraving.

In my opinion, drawing anticipations in white or black constitute themselves as the basic matter of what is conceivable. Indeed, I see it as the first empirical experience of linographic creativity, which prepares a figurative foreshadowing of an imaginary event. By consolidating what is imagined, as soon as it is printed on the plate, it is possible to evoke in the viewer a reflective attitude and the accompanying ambiguity when he reflects on the narrative content, creating his own interpretations.

Linocut proposals, with a visible communicative intention, open up a whole range of interpretative possibilities around the contradictions resulting from deep feelings and changing behaviors. Irony turns out to be inherent in the introspection and self-harm when we become victims of our complicated inner reality.

In this context, the figurative approach emphasizes the idea of introducing neo-expressionism the grotesque features of which, deformation and deconstruction, emphasize the decadence and anxiety of characters who by their character betray their own existential attitude.

Visual-graphic activations of linocut lines (white on black background, black on white) offer a variety of features depending on their thickness and form (active and continuous lines or angular and calm), which respectively refer to heat and cold. In the case of spots (white on black and black on white), the outline of their contours determines either the warmth of their forms (wavy and gentle contours) or their cold (angular and violent contours).

During the creative-graphic process this multiplicity of textures is defined as a whole that brings graphic richness to the figurative narrative. This narrative is a proposal for formal expression in order to create a discourse that does not intend to be just the product of a shallow and decorative procedure but a materialization of what is necessary for creative intentionality.

Compositions refer to the active system of spatial alterations, as well as to the variety of proportions of the figures. Following the hierarchy of narrative-linocut visualizations, they achieve the interaction of figurative forms on different planes.

As for the subject matter, the current definitions of henchmen and scavengers are unequivocally pejorative. A henchman is a person who, in exchange for money and on the orders of his superior or boss, commits acts of violence against others. Today, its synonym is "sicario" which usually brings to mind a criminal network, a power mafia or drug cartels.

The choice of topics related to this type of human behavior derives from irrational events taken from everyday life in which modern man chooses to corrupt and destroy his neighbor in exchange for material and economic benefits.

Both in Mexico and in Poland graphic art is a vehicle of contesting expression, carried out in order to show various topics related to social contradictions. Its task is to stimulate the viewer to reflection and critical interpretations through visual metaphors.

The myths of everyday life suggested in the series about the henchmen and scavengers are constituted as anthropozoomorphic

iconographies the narratives and expressions of which metaphorically depict the contemporary social reality. It is not unique to Mexico: it intends to present in a universal way the symptomatic convulsions of human social behavior.

Metamorphoses were a theme customarily discussed in Greco-Roman mythologies (for example, the metamorphosis of Apuleius in Ovid's "Golden Ass"). The fabulous stories that appear in the graphic narrative I proposed in the series of linocuts refer to hybrid deeds and contradictory iconographic figures. However, they do not personify, as in past epochs, the forces of nature but are the embodiment, in the format of the mythology of everyday life, of complex and unpredictable aspects of the human existential condition in contemporary society.

The meaning of the monstrous or horrible – fancy beings with human-animal characteristics or freaks that combine parts of different animal species in their anatomy – comes from Greco-Roman mythology in which these figures embodied consequences of transgression of the laws of nature.

The mythical world was a central theme in Antiquity. In this context, monsters are an embodiment of the archetypes of evil, as they have crossed the boundaries of what is forbidden. Jellyfish, griffins, centaurs, sirens and minotaurs are scary. These figures appeared as a reverse of the classical ideal of beauty which had its own iconography of what was monstrous or devoid of order. They depict the ugliness and absurdity of what is grotesque in the hybrid forms, synonymous with an excess of violence, perversion and corruption of everything that is on the opposite side of rationality.

The bad qualities and negative attributes of the henchmen, the servants of Hades, the god of the dead in Greek mythology, as well as the scary scavengers belonging to the rebellious race practicing cannibalism in Arab Islamic mythology, are known.

Given these historiographic references, it is interesting how contemporary graphic art returns to the aesthetics of the grotesque as a formal resource for metaphorizing reality. Creative linocut processes are used there in which formal ambivalence during deformation and figurative deconstruction is intended to be intentionally removed from direct and descriptive documentation.

Today, these definitions are potentially susceptible to metaphorical treatment in order to shape a certain internal and imagined mythology (mythography) that evokes man's inner struggles and his struggle with others in the course of social interactions. There, contradictions, sometimes unpredictable, of our social consciousness become present in the form of motivation of behavior and reflection, dialogue, struggle, fatigue, tension, threat and aggression.

In a sense, I argue that the mythographies of everyday life, understood as a creative duality between fiction and reality, metaphorize the polarizations of anthropogenic coexistence, referring to the problems that happen socially to people who inhabit our planet.

Myths usually answer certain existential questions: Who are we? Where do we come from?

Where are we going? Why are we here?

While it is true that figurative propositions include the fictional, the graphic narrative evokes the contradictory human condition. It does so both at the level of interpersonal relations in society, and specifically in the case of the subject of the henchmen and scavengers.

The pejorative idea of a henchman derives from his definition as a man who, in exchange for money or power and on command, symptomatically modifies his behavior by making threats, showing aggression or even committing murders. The work of the henchman consists in carrying out orders of the boss or authorities, usually with the use of force or violence.

The term scavenger refers primarily to animals that consume corpses of others without participating in their hunting, as vultures do, for example. However, this phrase is also used metaphorically to describe what is associated with scavengers: something corrupt that reflects in a despicable way on human behavior. This term is used to describe people who exploit the plight of others to criticize, provoke conflicts or receive benefits by behaving in the manner of a scavenger.

Modern man, contrary to the direction of his material and technological evolution, has become an opportunistic scavenger taking, to the extreme, advantage of his dead fellowmen.

The fact of being a predator or a scavenger is an irrational source of social conflicts in human history, which often end in wars.

The formal and technical approach related to the subject of this cycle of linocuts finds its justification in the formal idea of hybrid figuration of what is grotesque. Imaginary anthropozoomorphic anatomies are created in order to metaphorize the two poles that invariably influence the decisions and social behaviors of modern man: rationality and irrationality.

We can conclude that the progress and development of technological means is inversely proportional to the evolution of the ethical, spiritual and moral values of man. It is this lack of value, dehumanization and degradation of humanity that are established in the graphics I propose as the main thematic raw material. It is treated in a fictitious way through an imaginary bestiary.

The dark atmosphere surrounding the protagonists' characters is filled with a large number of birds which are a metaphor for instability and the ephemeral nature of social coexistence. It is a phenomenon so far-reaching that man, trapped in his own inconstancy, merges into a bird-man understood as an individual formal identity.

At other times, bodily expressive portraits of man as a modern scavenger are formed, in whose physiognomy one can see the anxiety and hatred inherent in the struggle of opposites, which is devoid of hope for reconciliation.

A society governed by intelligent systems that offer us comfortable ways of living and material pleasures is challenged by a crisis of spiritual poverty.

In my imaginary anticipations I use the dash as a basic resource for non-verbal and structural searches. The first linear drawing sketches on the surface of linoleum, before cutting, lead to the stage preceding the already printed forms which I perceive as hybrid genealogies. In their character of an anthropomorphic imaginarium they are undoubtedly inspired by my visual culture grounded, on the one hand, in Mexican folk art, specifically in wooden masks from Tixtla, in the state of Guerrero. On the other hand, they derive from the inspiration by “alebrijes”: imaginary beings created from physiognomic fragments of various animals, both fantastic and real, in the shape of a hybrid connection that creates an imaginary being. These Mexican craftworks can be created from cardboard and painted in vivid and cheerful colors. In contrast, the “alebrijes” from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, carved in fossil wood and painted with acrylic, are sold in squares, bazaars and handicraft workshops throughout the region. There is a belief that the “alebrijes” can guard homes, scaring away evil spirits. This applies primarily to “alebrijes” with the most monstrous or monstrous appearance.

The figures of these fancy animals are decorated with motifs taken from Zapotec mythology. An essential part of it is the belief that every human being, from the moment of birth, is accompanied by one animal that guides him through life as a “nahual”. It is these “nahuals” that are called “alebrijes” today.

On the other hand, my works printed in black and white are original-multiple linocuts in which I sublimate my experiences in relation to everyday life. In the processes of figuration, both mental and creative, I expose all my stylistic influences understood as a distinguished visual culture. It is, for example, German expressionism, especially in the graphic part, defined conceptually as the deformation of reality in order to express in a more subjective way the contradictory nature of man, giving priority to expression over an objective description of the world. I see the expressionist trend, which is part of my own stylistic perspective, as possible for universal application – in any geographical space with its contemporary social issues – in order to search for new dimensions of imagination and fantasy, characteristic of the author’s inner world.

In parallel to emotive expression, the proposed series of linocuts can be reproduced in an interpretation proper to literary poetics. It is most accurately reflected in the Baroque process of figurative production, in the articulation of various narrative and sub-narrative events that can cause polysemia in the viewer.

The graphic layout of messages derived from everyday events is subordinated not only to the impersonal formality of constructive strategies, but also to something deeper, which takes place in expressive and emotive intuition. I believe that, in my case, the component rational and subjective parts (structuring and improvisation) internalize and intertwine in order to create a scaffolding of the graphic imaginarium.

The weight of meaning is condensed in faces, individual heads, cut off by executioners or henchmen, and in bodies of

anthropomorphic shapes that intend to move away from the illusory representations of the human figure. Imaginary anatomies are described primarily in the direction of the interior of figurative masses, away from objective physiologies.

Thus, linocut representations carry with them a series of data and visual insinuations through which the viewer deduces the possibility of narration to the rhythm of dismemberment of the characters and senses a dramatic story in the heart of a crack made of remains, of broken signs, from which changed traces of the real world still emerge. Around the main figures there is a constant dynamism and ambiguous production of anthropozoomorphic figures that conceptually form the so-called visual metaphor of what is literally known as monstrous. This is justified by the similarity of some people to the beast, and more specifically, their aggressive actions and interpersonal and social annihilation to what is associated with bestiality.

Formation and deformation correspond to reality and irreality. During creative work, one sometimes experiences a desire to escape to fictional worlds. This happens during drawing and blurring with a pencil on the surface of linoleum, as well as during the later, definitive and impossible to correct, physical activity consisting in printing and adding, summing and agglomerating strange figurations. This is how metaphotographs are created in the form of allegories: where a new being is called to life, another dies. In terms of contemporary social issues: where a flower is formed, one man is annihilated.

In this context, most graphic images arise from self-neglect and destruction, revealing their desperate, particular and unique, imaginary internal anatomies. They are a trace and result of bodily aggression, which visually metaphorize anomalies of the human condition.

From the point of view of composition, the figurative field of view does not lead, in most cases, to the representation of the natural environment or scenery, nor does it ever consolidate the logical formal and spatial structure inherent in traditional perspectives. What happens graphically is, on the one hand, an expressive hyperbole of the angles of the main characters that occupy the foreground. On the other hand, the differences in the size of the secondary figurations create sub-narrative rhythms with dynamics relevant to the agglomeration distribution of fantastic entities, which in their own way create organized chaos, dramatically solving the horror vacui.

Regarding the light contrast, there are no large spaces reserved for black in the compositions, nor projections of spacious white zones. There is no silence, no breaks, no oxygen. In the absence of compositionally scenic distribution, the background context is saturated, in most cases, with the figurative dynamics of birds and human-birds which evoke the variability and transience of human behavior. The expressive emphasis focuses primarily on the bodily attitude of larger characters. The formal exploration focuses on the deconstructive solution of their distorted proportions

As I have already mentioned, the line is the basic element of structuring. Even if one strives primarily towards non-verbal expression, distortions, different from realistic conventions, and the solidity and corporeality of forms, are elements that are worth considering.

Linear variations in the shaping of the graphic idea range from linoleum cuts, which give form and define relief, through hatching and clear tangles of lines that form gray zones, differentiating planes, to the use of the line as a basic graphic resource that provides imaginary anatomies with rich structural threads of a physiognomic organic nature. The combination of these elements creates a compact body, the presence and significance of which on a large sheet of paper enhances the graphic expressive effect of linear connotations of what is ominous and mysterious.

The figurative appearance, zoologically impossible to classify, does not intend to evoke, through thematic references, horror or aversion, but rather a waiting suspense.

The use of the line and its treatment as an engraving on the relief on linoleum does not follow illustrative goals. The variety of figurative forms is a sufficient proof of stylistic intentionality focused on aesthetic autonomy which is a product of the symbiosis of Mexican culture and professional art education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow in the years 1987-1992. At the heart of my metaphorical linocut proposals there is a combination of these two artistic dimensions.

Visual and graphic reading, the result of both influences, focuses on the aesthetics of the grotesque. Specifically, on the combination of human and animal features, which is close to both the expressionist figuration of Polish contemporary graphic art and the visual language of Mexican folk art. The grotesque masses of bodies gain volume thanks to the intention to introduce a rich linear texture which tends to strengthen the imaginary anatomy of the figure, resulting from imaginary formal exploration.

As for the dash that forms the contours of the characters, both main and secondary, it is continuous, full and devoid of cuts. Its thickness varies in favor of light modulation. The white spot, as a side graphic element, becomes not only a linocut agent modulating light, but also a building block of forms.

It should be noted that the contemplative intention of the visual message does not consist in a sudden interception of the viewer's gaze, as is the case with the poster, but expects him to be involved in baroque narrative and sub-narrative events in order to formulate relevant interpretative representations.



Victor M. Hernández Castillo

Xochimilco, Mexico City,

March 17th, 2022.



SERIES TITLED: HENCHMEN AND SCAVENGERS

**DOCTORAL
GRAPHIC
WORK OF
VICTOR
MANUEL
HERNÁNDEZ
CASTILLO.**

**ACADEMY OF FINE
ARTS IN KATOWICE,
POLAND.**



1. "I am all the breath in times of poverty".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
76 x 98.5 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints
2018.



2. "My conscience serves me like a worm".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
78 x 118 cm. (image)
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints.
2019.



3. "Mr. Hyde".
Linocut printed on cotton paper .
64 x 100 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints.
2020.



4. "I am all thirsty for corrosión".

Linocut printed on cotton paper.

64 x 100 cm. (image).

80 x 120 cm. (paper).

Edition of 15 prints .

2020.



5. "Great theater of the children of the earth".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
69 x 115 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints .
2020.



6. "Opening our Diary".
Linocut printed on cotton paper
75 x 100 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints.
2020.



7. "Who lives hurts".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
66 x 119 cms. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints.
2020.



8. "The Eye of the eternity".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
79 x 98 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 Prints.
2021.



9. "In the crosshair".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
73.5 x 98 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints
2021.



10. "Predators".

Linocut printed on cotton paper .

66 x 99 cm. (image).

80 x 120 cm. (paper).

Edition of 15 prints

2021.



11. "Leaving the promised land: wounded traces".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
66 x 98 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints.
2021.



12. "Poisonous Anatomy".
Linocut printed on cotton paper.
74.5 x 113.5 cm. (image).
80 x 120 cm. (paper).
Edition of 15 prints .
2021.



**A SERIES
OF ETCHINGS
ENTITLED
“QUO VADIS”:
MOVING
ARCHETYPES**

The search proper to the second cycle of the twelve gravure prints of various formats is formally directed towards figurative hybridization understood as an imaginary anatomy within which human and animal fragments, as well as machines and moving artifacts, combine into a metaphorical idea of what is real. These associations lead to the occurrence of symbolic anecdotes. Their theme is the imaginary archetypes of man subjected to grotesque deformations and reduced to the scope of their own usefulness. He does not know where he is going or what direction he should take. He is subordinated to pragmatism resulting from the mechanical rituals of everyday life.

Fusion of the human figure with the motifs of movement: the circle as a formal-metaphorical icon.

At first, the fusion of the human figure with the motifs of movement gains the status of the main formal theme. I am primarily interested in the presentation of organic bodily anatomies subjected to intervention with artifacts constituted by technological products.

In this representative context, the formal-metaphorical icon of the circle is a fertile graphic element that evokes existential allegories around evolutionary or fading turns in human history. The circle revolves around the egocentric axis of man, and its rotating motion can metaphorically suggest the inconstancy and little stability inherent in human behavior, both in periods of prosperity and in unfavorable times.

The wheel, an invention of man, can leave a print-sign on the ground on which it moves. The wheel can hit or run over, becoming a weapon created by a lack of order and against the will of someone who does not agree to the chosen direction. In the history of mankind it is not possible to indicate the only ideological path that had to be followed; on the contrary, we have taken various paths over the centuries. Continuous thinking and acting requires each of us to discover different new directions, different goals, as well as to multiply perspectives.

The metaphor of the wheel carries with it a clearly defined idea: THE BECOMING OF THE WILL OF MAN. Breaks / intervals, rhythm, changes of direction and falls evoke symptomatic emotional and behavioral changes. The invigorating power of the wheel can never be fully understood in an unequivocal way, since it evokes not only movement back and forth (evolution – the disappearance of human reason) but also a physical force in motion that can erase and destroy others, thus turning into an instrument of torture.

Thus, the free will seen in human actions and intentions turns the social wheel of the world. And if it stops at a certain place and time, as it is happening now, during the lockdown period caused by the CoViD-19 pandemic, then a person can draw on his intelligence to take advantage of these interruptions in movement. He thus marks new roads that this wheel will take as a tool of the calculation mechanism.

There is no escape. We are in this rotational motion: WE ARE THIS MOVEMENT the rational or irrational rolling of which is a part of the complex nature of the *ecce-homo* immersed in the historical struggle between the forces of good and evil, as well as in the clash of opposites in the shape of the wheel of the world. In the meantime, we experience both the certainty resulting from various displacements interpreted as right, and the uncertainty that comes from events understood as erroneous.

The “Quo Vadis” series of graphics is intended to constitute itself as a reflective allegory referring to the loss by man of the symbolic horizon of meaning in a situation where he is trapped by technology of which he is the creator. In the thematic development of the series of twelve etchings there are also other creative searches proper to deformation and ambiguity. They concern gestures of organic and inorganic hybrid figures (man, animal, machine), which evoke the theme of confusion and disorder, as well as the loss of a spiritual horizon creating a huge imbalance in the face of accelerated technological progress.

With regard to the above-mentioned topic, the symbolic treatment of the image of the animal and its symbiosis with the human figure and with machines refers to the concept of grotesqueness and analyzes it in relation to human confrontationalism, horror and disgust. The symbolic function of animal as a metaphor for what is irrational in man formally requires a figurative hybridization of man and animal. Historically, this type of search enriched the visual language of the artistic avant-garde of the early 20th century, in which the meaning of animality was constructed through aesthetic categories, having little to do with beauty but only with what is monstrous, ominous and ugly.

The brutality of reality is interpreted through deformation, creating new figurative forms that disturb the natural order, giving rise to the emergence of a repertoire of imaginary genres. To observe these new imaginary beings is, at the same time, to look at ourselves and, in fact, to see our own contradictions. The term “hybridization” refers to the crossing or mixing of elements belonging to different natural orders, which give rise to a new organism, thus expanding the creative horizon.

The traditional gravure printing techniques (etching and aquatint) are more useful to me for the graphical development of figurative hybridization, as the subject requires a more complex and detailed representation in the symbiosis of man

/ animal with machines. This representation is not inherent in linocut. In this case, the first stage established by linear strokes is made in the process of calligraphic search with a steel needle on a thin layer of varnish laid on a zinc plate. The formal concept acquires structure by complementing itself with textural values through the use of roulettes, as well as aquatints to obtain light contrast. There are no previous sketches, nor are carbon papers made to transfer graphic ideas to the plate. The drawing, from the calligraphic and exploratory order, is made in an intuitive way directly on the plate. The mind, with its imaginative ability, takes into account formal and thematic attributes for elaboration. Etching lines become a structural tool.

In these etching works, figurative hybridization humans / animals / machines becomes a process of dehumanization when searching for variants of moving archetypes. My works are an allegory about modern man who has failed to give the technology he created humanistic features, thus losing the ability to create harmonious bonds with others and with nature. Now the situation has been reversed: it is the machine that dominates man. The figurative hybridization of man-machine requires me to define man as a “rational” living being, and the machine as an artifact created by him to improve his natural abilities.

These imaginary elements graphically shape the mythical archetype of our time, in which technology tends towards material evolution, while releasing in man what is most primitive and irrational. Technological progress has surpassed its creator and absorbs him, dominating his own organic nature. By misunderstanding technology as an apparently mechanical issue, we see our relationship with it as automated. We forget that technology dehumanizes man and becomes an ideological tool of domination and destruction.

Both of these forms are manifestations of irrational behavior in an impersonal social context, which contradicts typically human traits such as sensitivity, affectivity and rationality. As a result of these reflections, I propose in this series of etchings heterogonic figurations shaped from organic and inorganic matter, mechanically animated, devoid of feelings and morality, observed in the context proper to industrialization, in which they are presented as cold, rigid, unimaginative and passive beings. They negate themselves along with the qualities inherent in their human nature, distancing themselves from their affectivity and open-mindedness.

The metaphorical approach incorporates these attributes and expressive qualities in characters that abandon their human shape, taking on heterogeneous anatomies distorting their true nature. In short, “Quo Vadis” is a graphic cycle with various allegorical figurative variants thematically consistent with existential reflection on the functional relationship of man with technology and with various behavioral nuances. Also with the contradictions that arise from interpersonal and social relationships, which are the result of accelerated material progress and mechanical rituals of everyday life.



Victor M. Hernández Castillo
Xochimilco, Mexico City,
March 17th, 2022.



CYCLE OF 12 ETCHINGS : QUO-VADIS.



1. " Still life " .

Etching and aquatint on a copper plate.

60 x 90 cms. (image).

75 x 115 cms. (paper).

Edition : 10 prints

2020.



2. "Ecce Hommo".
Etching and aquatint on a copper plate.
90 x 60 cms. (image).
115 x 75 cms. (paper).
Edition : 10 prints.
2020.



3. "Day 31".
Etching and Aquatint on a copper plate.
60 x 90 cms. (image).
75 x 115 cms. (paper).
Edition 10 prints.
2020.



4. Imaginary Carousel.

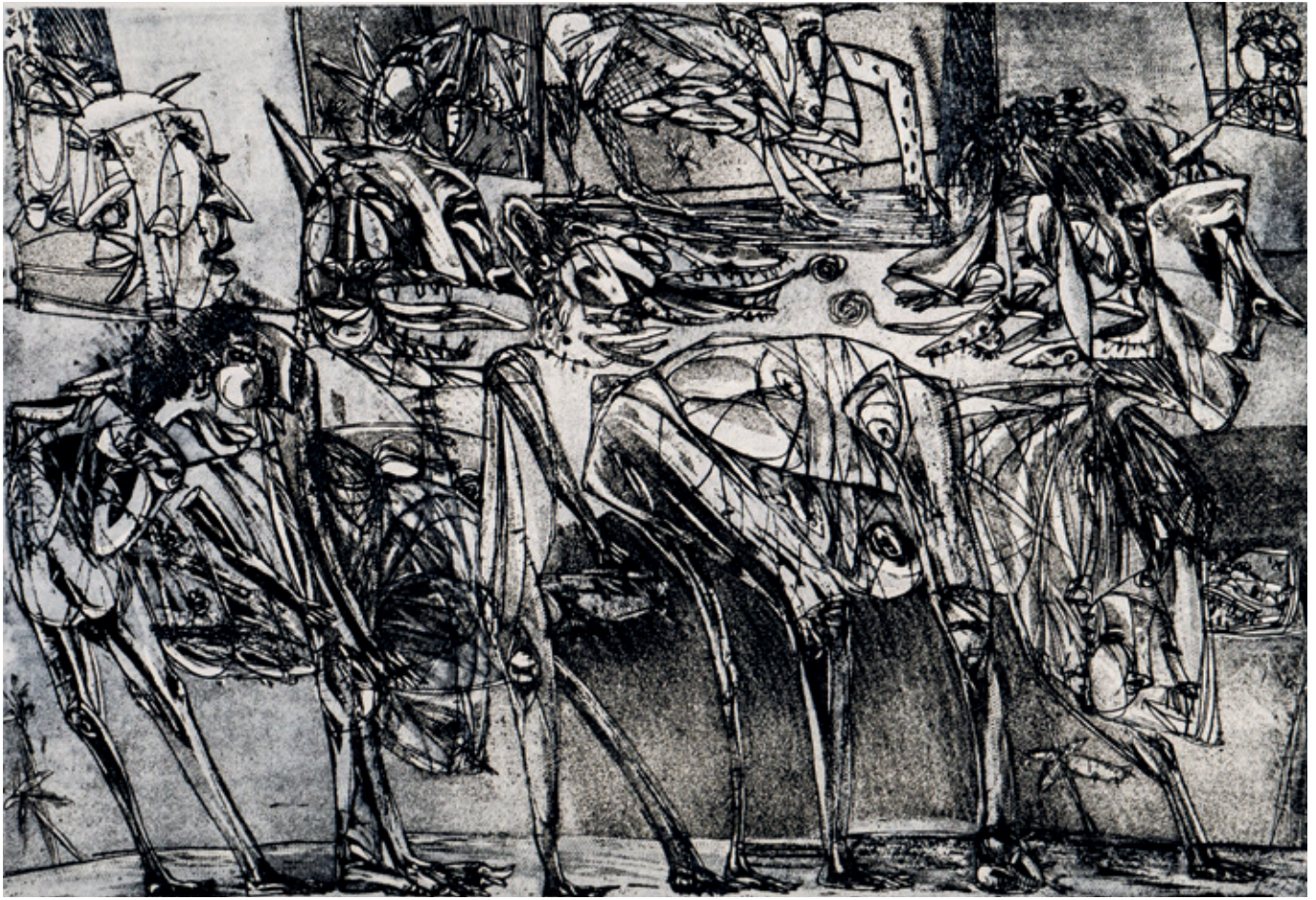
Etching and Aquatint on the zinc plate.

32.5 x 49 cms. (obraz).

41 x 56 .5 cms. (papier).

Edition 10 prints.

2021.



5. "imaginary bestiary".
Etching and aquatint on the zinc plate.
33.5 x 49 cms (image).
41 x 57 cms. (paper).
Edition 10 prints.
2021.



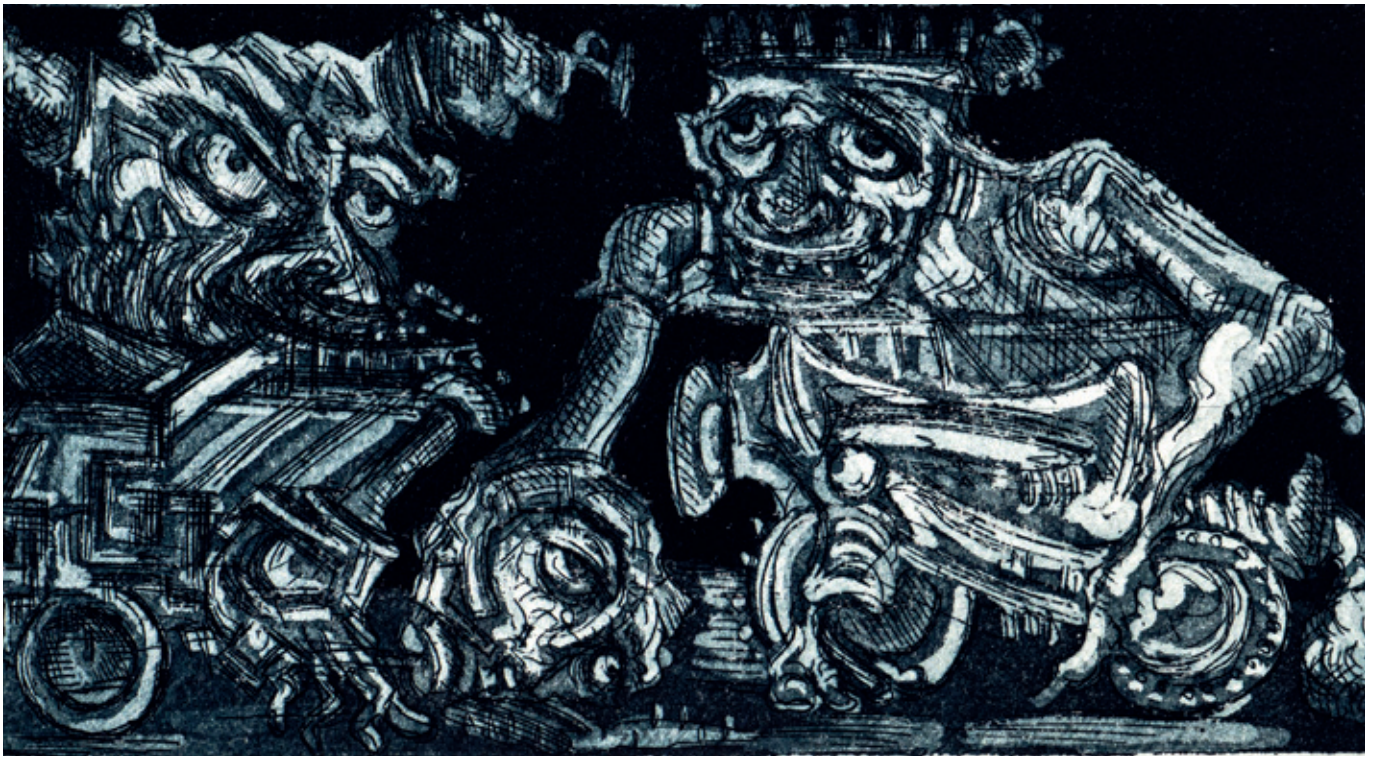
6. " Clearing the road ".
Akwafora i Akwatinta na plicie cynkowej.
10 x 10 cms. (image).
35 x 25 cms. (paper).
Edition 10 prints .
2022.



7. "Machine - human "
Etching and Aquatint on the zinc plate.
10 x 10 cms. (image).
35 x 25 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.



8. " Human- Machine ".
Etching and Aquatint on the zinc plate.
10 x 10 cms. (image).
35 x 25 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.



9. "The Machine King".
Etching and Aquatint on the zinc plate .
10 x 10 cms. (image).
35 x 25 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.



10. "The Wheel of Life ".
Etching and Aquatint on the zinc plate.
Diameter 15 cms. (image).
60 x 40 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.



11. " My future piece".
Etching and Aquatint on a copper plate.
30 x 50 cms. (image).
40 x 60.5 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.



12. "Wounded Route".
Etching and Aquatint on a copper plate.
30 x 50 cms. (image).
40 x 60.5 cms. (paper).
Edition 20 prints.
2022.