



Angel Ramiro Sanchez, born in Venezuela in 1974 and trained in Florence, works in an academic realist style, but that general designation barely accounts for his extraordinary and highly personal reinterpretation of historical models. This fall, a solo exhibition of his latest works, at the Grenning Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York, reveals a fascinating artist capable of transfiguring the mundane and bringing the mythological to contemporary life. *Tiresia* (see cover), a bust-length study of a young man in shadowed profile, his eyes bandaged, is striking on purely painterly terms, with its muted Spanish palette and relaxed brushwork. The vague sense of unease and solemnity in this deceptively straightforward portrait is underlined by the title, which uses the feminine form of Tiresius. In Greek myth, the Theban Tiresias was struck blind by the gods but given the compensating gift of prophecy, exemplifying the paradox of darkness and insight. As a literary character, he advises Odysseus in the underworld and reappears in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, alluding to his seven years as a woman and thus his ability to know the hearts of both sexes. Ramiro Sanchez works in a timeless realist idiom that owes something to the Spanish Baroque as well as to nineteenth-century artists such as Whistler, Sargent and Hammershoi. In a fresh approach to mythological subjects, he avoids Arcadian landscapes and reduces traditional attributes to everyday objects. His *Pandora* is no classical nymph but a thoughtful woman gazing into an empty bowl. Seated, in profile, in a simply furnished room, she is, as in Whistler's portraits of his mother and Thomas Carlyle, part of an arrangement, a demonstration of what the artist can do with a limited palette. *Pandora* is shaped by areas of white-washed wall, strong black and brown rectangles and the blood-red of a rug. The light is reminiscent of Vermeer, the coloring, of Velázquez.



Angel Ramiro Sanchez, *Pandora*, 2002
 Courtesy Grenning Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

Several half-length paintings illustrate character types. The gaunt, bearded figure of *Der Wanderer* has the quiet dignity of a Spanish saint. A cultured man in spartan clothes, he carries a flute and a drawing pad as attributes, suggesting the itinerant artists of German Romanticism and Matthew Arnold's scholar gypsy. The two figures in *Expelled* look contemporary, but the man in shirt sleeves gazing out at us and the woman in a black slip hunched in front of him, her face obscured by her hair, have learned the lesson of Adam and Eve. Without their allusive titles, we might not grasp the ancient narratives at work behind the faces and body language of the individuals Ramiro Sanchez depicts, but their humanity would still be evident. They are our contemporaries yet seem to inhabit a timeless dimension in which the old stories are perennially re-enacted.

The exhibition includes landscapes and some excellent character heads in charcoal, but special mention must be reserved for the artist's pastels. These quiet interiors are based on Ramiro Sanchez's farmhouse home near Florence, mostly glimpses down modest passageways into apparently deserted rooms. The interiors are unpeopled yet rich with the presence of life. Simplified rectangles of space are illuminated by Vermeer-like light, symbolic of the mystery at the heart of everyday experience. *La Cucina* and *La Finestra* are modest works thematically, but they demonstrate the artist's sensitivity to the world around him and the formal power of his craft. Ramiro Sanchez exhibits internationally; he is also a Senior Painting Instructor at the Florence Academy of Art. "Angel Ramiro Sanchez: Latest Works" remains on view through October 6, 2002, at Grenning Gallery, 90 Main Street, Sag Harbor, NY 11963. Telephone: (631) 725-8469. On the web at www.grenninggallery.com.