
THE REBEL MYSTIQUE: CONTEMPORARY ART IN SPAIN

*Interview with Barcelona
curator Jorge Luis Marzo*

Also:

YIELD: MODEL 95067
by Frank Manners

**OWN A WHOLE SHOW:
IT BETTER BE BEAUTIFUL**
*by Caroline Birks and
Julie Voyce*

**THE EXPERIENCE OF
SHEFFIELD LAKE**
by Milly Ristvedt

JEANNIE THIB: SURVIVAL TIPS
by Carol Barbour



LES PSYCHOPOMPES BY MARC AUDETTE
BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH 42" X 72"

Artword Artists Forum

No. 19 Spring/Summer 1994

The magazine for artists by artists.

Publisher: Ronald Weihs

Editor: Judith Sandiford

Associate Editors:

Anthony Arnold, Lynn Campbell,
Maggie Dorning-Olvera, Joyce Kline

Marketing: Katie Kaufman

Distribution: Andrew Glinski

Logo /Cover Design: Lynn Campbell

Transcription: Robert Allison

Editorial Assistance: Eric Cobham,
Irma Orchard

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Editorial office (RCW Documentation):

81 Portland Street, Suite 201

Toronto, Ontario M5V 2M9

Tel: (416) 408-1146 Fax: 408-0532

Artword welcomes contributions from artists and those interested in the arts. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity. Artword assumes no responsibility or liability for claims made for any products or services reported or advertised.

Circulation: 3,000 copies free in galleries, art supply stores, bookstores in Toronto, and 1,500 copies mailed cross-Canada to galleries.

To receive copies by mail send a \$20 cheque to Artword. (Subscription includes a membership in Artword Centre for theatre and performance.)

Advertising: To reserve space call 408-1146. Rates for single insertion: 1/8 page \$40; 1/6 page \$50; 1/4 page \$75; 1/2 page \$145; full page \$275. Reductions for contract of four.

ISSN: 1191-9078

Artword is published quarterly.

Next Deadline: Sept. 3, 1994

Editorial Policy: Artword is a voice for all artists. The magazine has no affiliations or alignments, and is committed to fostering a dialogue among artists. Call us if you want to make a submission to the magazine. The support from our advertisers covers our production expenses. We do not seek grants. Artword is written by you and for you, as a labour of love.

Credits: Cover photo, courtesy Gallery 44; photos p.7-9, Art Gallery of Ontario; p.16-18, courtesy Milly Ristvedt; p.3 & 24-25, Bruce Holland; p.22-23 layout/graphics, Lynn Campbell; p.15 & p.24-25, layout Lynn Campbell; p.29, drawings Maureen Gauthier.

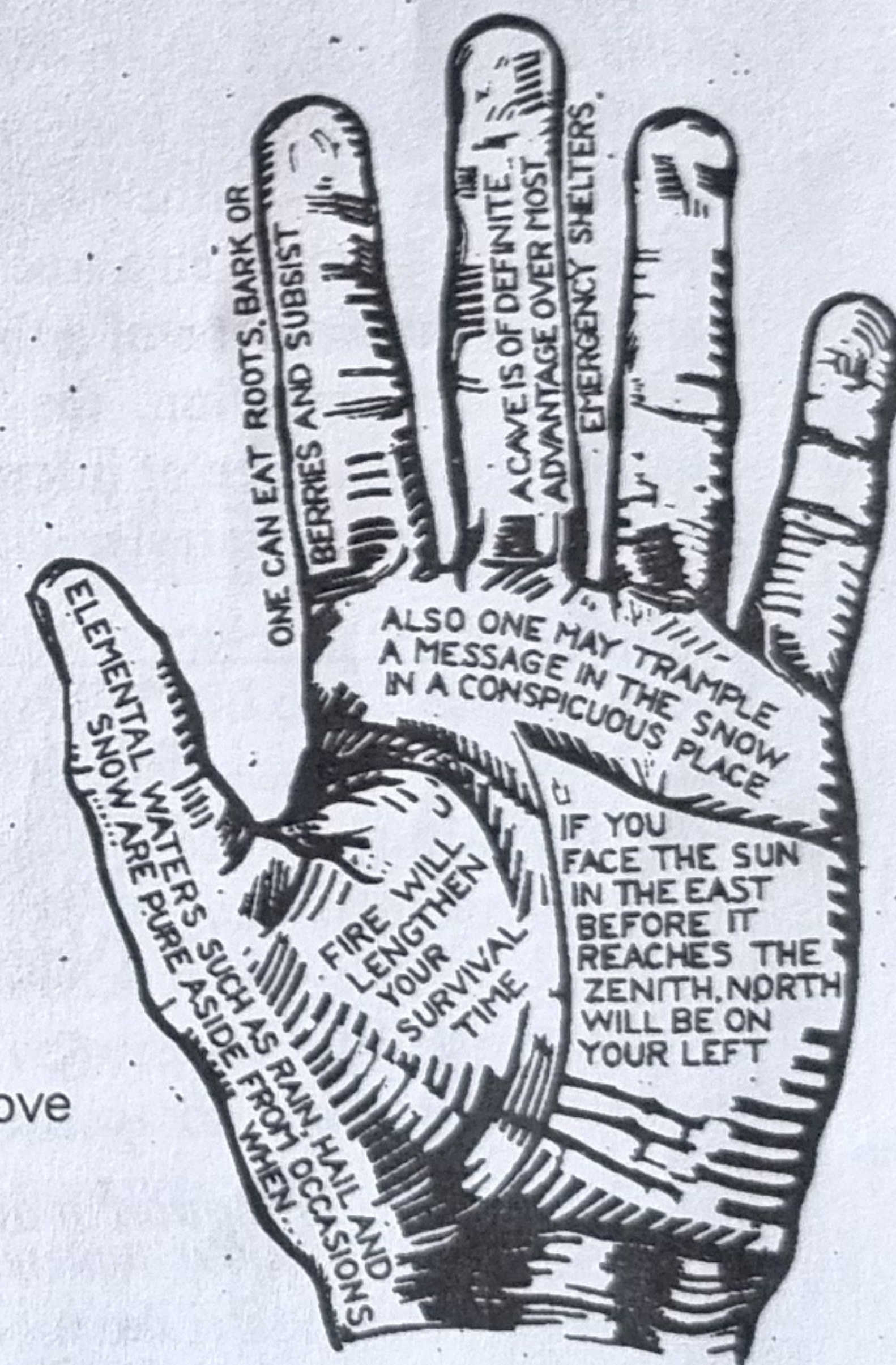
ARTWORD

ARTISTS FORUM

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Detail from Jeannie Thib's
5-part linocut *Tabula*,
part of *Survival Tips*

Cover: Marc Audette — *Les psychopompes* (at Gallery 44 in May)

Psychopomp is the name Carl Jung gave to beings who appear to guide us through the dreamworld into the deepest part of our unconscious; to places — says Québec artist Marc Audette — we may not want to go. The psychopomp leads with great ceremony and circumstance; they are majestic, awesome beings who cannot be dismissed or ignored. (The Chimera, the Manticore and the Phoenix are examples from other cultures.) Marc Audette conjures his own psychopomps, and sets the stage meticulously: objects and gestures shift in meaning. While they are clearly personal to the artist, they are strangely familiar These large-scale self-portraits are other-worldly, voluptuous and unnerving.

Janette Platana

The Rebel Mystique: Contemporary Art in Spain

Interview with Barcelona curator Jorge Luis Marzo

Jorge Luis Marzo, a curator and art critic from Barcelona, Spain, was in Toronto over a year ago (in February 1993), as part of an extended trip to North America. At that time, he gave lectures at York University and at Mercer Union on the cultural and artistic transitions in Spain from Franco to Expo'92. We met with Marzo over dinner and asked him to tell us more about his views on the role of the artist in Spain over the last 50 years.

Judith Sandiford and Ronald Weihs

Ronald Weihs: Pablo Neruda said in his autobiography that never was there a war that sparked so much artistic activity as the Spanish civil war. He was speaking of the Republican cause — it was very much an artists' cause. We think of the great exhibition in Paris in support of the civil war where Picasso's *Guernica* was exhibited. Perhaps that is where we should start.

Jorge Luis Marzo: The Spanish Republic between '33 and '39 was the first real popular culture that existed in Europe. For the first time Europe was able, in Spain, to create a real popular culture. And as you have said, there was the Paris International Exhibition in '37. Jose Maria Sert, the architect, made the pavilion. In photographs from the exhibition, you see the Soviet pavilion, the German pavilion, and then there is a little pavilion, the Spanish one. It was amazing, unbelievable. People like Miró, Picasso, Julio Gonzalez, intellectuals and artists and critics participated in the pavilion. In some ways that pavilion was the first real popular pavilion ever made in an international exhibition.

When Franco won the war in '39, then Spain in the '40s was like an erased land.

RW: A waste land?

JLM: An erased land. Franco devoted himself and the regime to annihilate any concept of culture coming from the Republic and annihilate any political opposition.

Until 1948, when it was suppressed, there was an official state of war. Under its terms a lot of people were killed. So we cannot talk about culture in Spain between '39 and '48. There was nothing. Just killing people.

We have to consider something.

Franco was not Hitler, Franco was not Mussolini, in terms of systematic annihilation of people. He was a military man. He was really silly in some ways. He never read a book. He was enthusiastic about Hollywood films, and had a room constructed to see Hollywood films in the palace. He was like a child in some ways. Lots of people have tried to investigate and

society was through the ecclesiastical organizations. So the church was appointed as the medium through which to channel theatre, books, censorship and all the cultural production and cultural policy from the state.

After the suppression in '48 of the official state of war, Franco decided that it was time to become internationally legitimate. The first step was religion and the second step was the Cold War.

In '54 Franco signed a treaty with the Vatican by which the Catholic Church would take care of all the cultural policies of the state. Franco decided that the best way to be integrated into Western society was, first of all, to be accepted into the UN, and then to be accepted within the new framework of the Cold War. So he pushed the United States to be accepted as a partner, because Spain was strategically placed in Europe, and was a very anti-communist country at that time. Economically, the incredible potential market in the United States was really interesting. So in '56 Spain was accepted in the UN. And the United States signed a treaty with Spain with some military bases and a lot of money coming from the United States to Spain.

At the beginning of the '50s, a lot of artists were against Franco. I am talking about modern artists. There were a lot of people who supported Franco, but I cannot call them avant garde artists at all. I don't know the names and I don't want to know the names — very classical, figurative, heroic sculpture and painting — painting Franco, and big angels with big swords, cutting heads, cutting Red heads with two horns, communists or whatever.

First of all, let's consider the big artists before the war in Spain. Spain has the idea that we have geniuses. We don't have movements, but we have geniuses. Picasso, Miró, Dalí were the three important names before the war.

Picasso himself was absolutely related with communist international movements after the Second World War. He was understood as — well, he's our big artist. He began Modernism, in some ways. He was our father, but the kind of father that children don't always want to follow. At the beginning of the fifties, Picasso was associated with a kind of realism that maybe didn't fit very well in a society like Spain. You couldn't paint any explicit figuration. So Picasso was understood like a father figure, but you could not follow him.

Dalí was a personal friend of Franco. Franco often visited his studio, and he made some very disgraceful statements about the regime. He was considered a right-wing fascist. So people had a problem with Salvadore Dalí.

The third major figure, Joan Miró, was the real channel for a lot of artists to understand the new social situation, and the new social function of the artist in the totalitarian society. Because Joan Miró was Republican, Joan Miró was left-wing, but a very individualistic painter relating with Paris, with Majorca and with Barcelona — the type of person who could give information to the country from Paris, from London, from New York.

In Paris it was a kind of battle between social realism and the new informalist painting. When the war was finished, there were people coming from surrealism who decided the time of being bourgeois is over, and the only way to be politically committed is to have a social realism, a Soviet realism, supported by Communist parties, anarchist movements.

There was another branch of this community like Dubuffet, Fautrier, supported by Michel Tapié as a critic. They decided to understand the matter, the colour, the concept of the matter of the painting. Europe is a ruin after the war. After Auschwitz, there is no possibility to think again about humanism. So if I have to paint, what kind of painting do I have to do? That kind of ruin produced informalism — no form, no defined form. So that kind of fight, Miró could translate to the Barcelona context.

In 1948, there was a magazine called *Dau al Set* [Dice at Seven]. Some people like Antoni Tàpies, Modest Cuixart, some critics like Juan-Eduardo Cirlot, gathered together and edited the first issue. They were the first informalist movement in Spain. All of them were really interested in people like Miró, Klee — people that were

working like Miró in a kind of symbolistic painting. That fit very well in the interests of the new artist. They began to understand that the only possibility to make a painting was abstract painting. Because an artist couldn't work with explicit figuration. He would go to jail if he did that.

At the end of the '50s, there was another

group called Grupo El Paso — people like Antonio Saura, Manuel Millares, Martín Chirino. They started to think of the possibility of making direct abstract expressionism.

That's the point where everything came together. Franco decided at that time that, with the new relationship that the regime had with the United States, it would be a very good idea to use culture as a form of political projection to foreign countries.

At that time there were several exhibitions coming from the United States and several exhibitions sponsored by the



Antonio Saura, *Cura #8*, 1959, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of Ontario

regime. The Venice Biennale was won by Tàpies one year, another year by Tàpies and Saura, and the Sao Paulo Biennale was won by Jorge de Oteiza. So there was an incredible paradox, because the regime was using the artists. There was a point that the regime was using modern artists that were anti-Frankist, when they were making paintings that they believed were anti-Frankist. So there was an incredible paradox and a lot of pain for the artists, a lot of suffering for them.

It had to with several questions. First of all, with the new relationship with the United States. Recent studies about abstract expressionism have shown that the United States considered American abstract expressionism as a tool against communism in the world. So, for example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the

Guggenheim Museum, and several agencies from the American government decided to put together big exhibitions to export to Europe, to go against communist factions in Europe that were trying to make political statements through social realism.

So the best way to do that is through an individualistic painter, alienated, not politically committed. Someone like Pollock, who said "In the new commodity-driven society, the only way to be really free is to be alienated, to be closed in my shell and then to explode" — like Pollock

Jorge de Oteiza, a highly influential Basque sculptor and father-figure to many of the younger Basque artists, won the Grand Prize for Sculpture in the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1958.

Spain has the idea that we have geniuses. We don't have movements, but we have geniuses.

research the psychological processes in Franco. He was a military man, a patriarchal guy. Don't disturb him, because if you disturb him, he will shout "shut up" and give you a slap in the face. And if you disturb him a lot, you will be killed. That happened. Thousands of people were killed but not politically as with Hitler, but structurally.

Franco decided that the best way to channel culture into

did, or Mark Rothko or Clifford Still or other abstract expressionist painters. When those exhibitions came to Spain, a lot of Spanish artists said "Oh my God! They are painting the same as we are painting." So they saw themselves legitimated.

Clement Greenberg, the critic, with Harold Rosenberg and Michael Freed, thought that expressionist painting — liberal art — is only possible in a liberal society. But we didn't have that in Spain. We had a liberal art, but we didn't have a liberal society. So I think Spain presents a real contradiction to Greenberg, because maybe Greenberg was not thinking of a liberal society, but of capitalistic societies, and that is different. Under Franco we had a capitalistic society. Franco wanted a capitalistic society. So I think it is very interesting to see how Greenberg was in some way falsifying his own discourse in maintaining that it is only possible to make liberal art in a liberal society. What you need is a capitalistic society, but it can be totalitarian or it can be democratic.

To have a liberal nationalistic art — what does that mean? European art was so strong that America had to invent some kind of identity, to say "That's a new art. We have taken up the torch of modernism." Because Europe had lost the torch in Auschwitz.

Greenberg thought that liberal nationalism meant American art, but projected to the old world, to the entire planet. And that is what Franco thought. We need an individual, nationalistic Spanish art, but able to be connected with, and legitimated in, the international market. So you can fit into the market. It is perfect — no one can accuse you of using the artists, and the artists will not be political because the market doesn't allow political art. So Franco thought, "That is my place." But the artists also thought, "In the international market, Franco cannot use me."

RW: Let's go back to the artists living in Spain at this time. Was there a community of artists at the time, concerned with their own issues? Were they talking to each other and creating their own art irrespective of what the government wanted? Do you have a sense of what it was like to function at that time?

JLM: Maybe we cannot talk about it as a community. Maybe we have to talk about it as a practical thing. El Paso, for example, joined together because technically it was easy for them to exhibit together. It was easier for them to have five people in one exhibition than one. Politically there was an advantage also. "Because we are ten people, it is easier not to be swallowed by the regime."

But you have to realize something. Grupo El Paso, the most important group in Spain in the '50s, only lasted three years. In that time, the American market, American criticism, American museums decided that the Spanish art



Antoni Tàpies, *Pintura Blanca, Siena, Gris, 1959*, oil and mixed media on canvas, Art Gallery of Ontario

was interesting. The market was the real force. If Saura is important, Saura will say bye bye to the Group. And that's what happened with Millares, with Saura, with everybody. At the point that they became successful and the American museums were interested in them, the group disappeared.

RW: What about the other artists outside this high profile group?

JLM: Completely isolated. Total and complete isolation. I am not even talking about women. If you're talking about women, it's amazing. No women. We don't have women in the history of what happens in Spain. That's as clear as water. I am quite sure that there were a lot of women working. What happens is that they don't exist because no one wanted to see them.

All the cultural policy in Spain was run by the Catholic church. Women don't make sense in the Catholic church. Franco — this is very funny — Franco gave prizes to big families. If you had 20 children, Franco gave a gift to you. Really, I am not kidding. It was a big contest, for big families. I remember a photograph with 25 children, the women, exhausted absolutely. Every year, one child, one child, one child. In United States you have, and in Canada I can imagine, the baby boom generation, right? Franco wanted to create a baby boom generation.

You have to understand something. What is the idea of the artist in Spain? Our idea of the artist is a genius, rebel and... a bullfighter, if you want. A person who is very individualistic. A person who reacts quickly, maybe not very intellectual but with a lot of passion. So you have to understand another thing. That was the idea that Franco

wanted to promote in the '50s, but that was the idea that the artists wanted for themselves. You can see the painting in the '50s by Grupo El Paso, Tàpies, Saura — the incredible gesture, the dramatic gesture, really the rebel gesture.

This makes it a very interesting story, because Franco himself was understood as the great rebel. That was the idea that the regime sold to the country in the '50s. So he was really in the Spanish tradition.

The principal curator for the arts in the '50s, '60s, '70s, Luis Gonzalez Robles, when he talked about the painters, Saura, Millares, Tàpies, he said: "I want big

Grupo El Paso (The Step) was a group of Informalist (abstract) painters based in Madrid. In 1957 they published a manifesto calling for a direct art and moral responsibility to their era and society. Founder members were painters Rafael Canogar, Luis Feito, Juana Francés, Manuel Millares, Antonio Saura and Antonio Suárez, sculptor Pablo Serrano, and critics José Ayllón and Manuel Conde. They were later joined by painters Manuel Rivera, Manuel Viola, sculptor Martín Chirino and critics Vicente Aguilera Cerni and Juan Eduardo Cirlot.

canvases, really dramatic, really expressionistic and really rebellious." Because this represents the idea that not only the Spanish people, but a lot of people, have about Spain. Bullfighters. Really strong.

The main point is that Franco did not create the culture. The culture existed before. The painters wanted that culture. And there was a point of incredible paradox, because Franco decided "I don't need to create anyone. I have them already. And they are left wing, they are my critics! It is amazing, because that is what I want. I can use them!"

The painters said, "Oh my God, what is going on? Because we are creating painting that we believed is politically committed, but it serves the interests of the country."

But that changed at the beginning of the '60s. There was an economic boom. The United States sank a lot of money in the country with the Marshall Plan. The market, the real capitalistic market in Spain began in an incredible way. When you have a market, American critics interested in your art, everything began to be, how do you say — light?

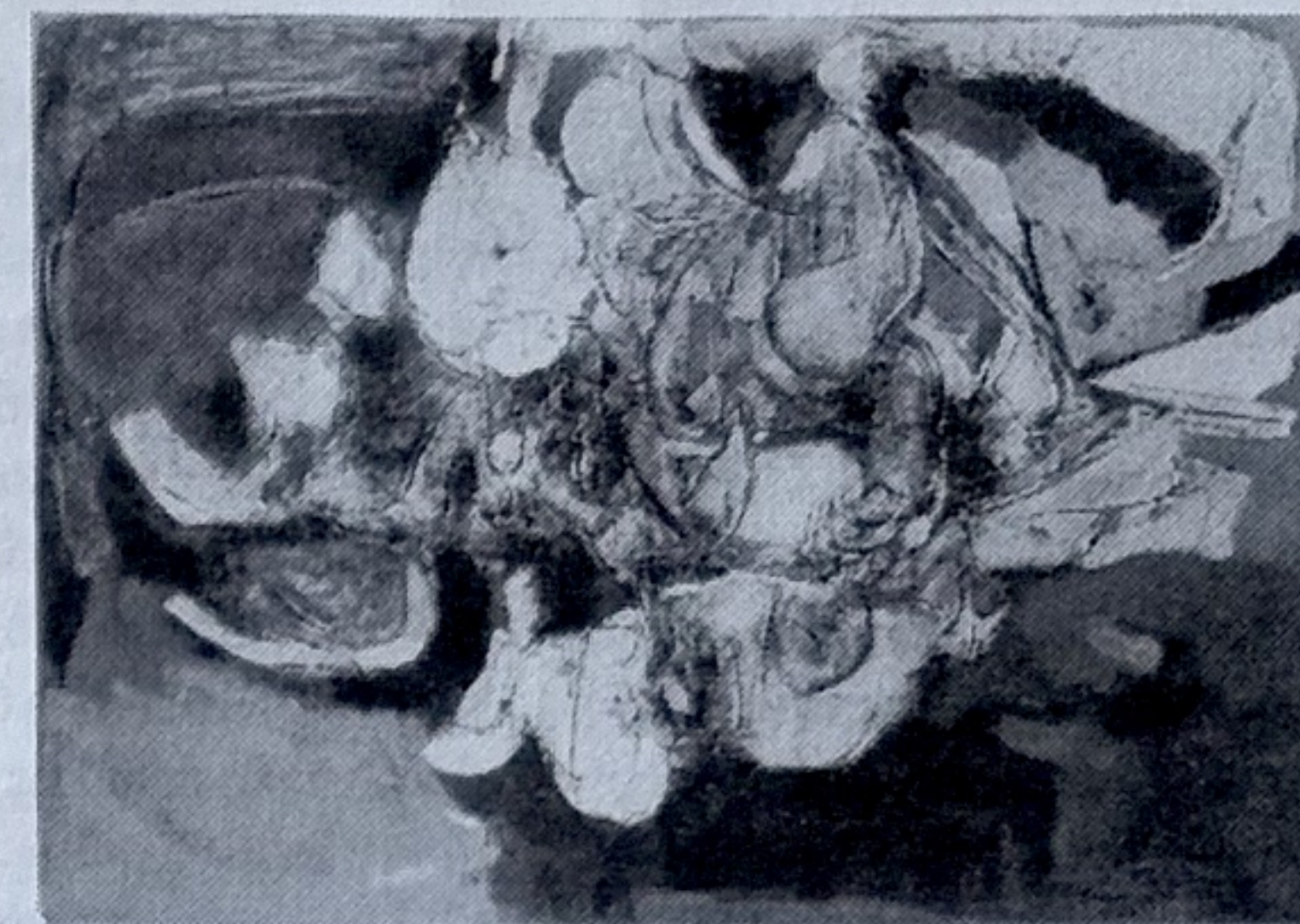
The fight against Frankism began to fail, because if you have money it is more difficult to be politically committed. The economic policies of the regime towards the artists were in some way "We have to sell you to the United States and Europe. Don't worry about that." Well, a lot of artists began to react.

What I think is interesting in the '60s is that all the artists thought that it is not important to go against Franco. It was more important to accept that we have lost the pre-war culture. It was great, it was fantastic, it was amazing and so important — it's lost forever. We have to fill the void the regime represents with our own culture. That means a commodity culture. For the first time in Spain people had a car. For the first time people had a refrigerator. A lot of tourism came to Spain. For the first time the Spanish people began to control their own economy.

So all the painters began to paint pop art. What is the relationship between Spanish traditional culture and all that kind of culture that comes from above? What is that machine? Plastic — my grandfather didn't know plastic until the '60s. What is plastic? It was amazing.

So with the new relationship with society, Franco is not so important. If I have money, if I have my refrigerator, if I have two houses, if I have my lover apart from my wife.... Everything began to be more or less comfortable. If I don't think about Franco, I can live really well. Franco used that. There are theories that Franco gave gifts to the country. "Do you want money? Okay, I will give you money, a lot, on one condition: you don't have to think about politics."

That is what happened, and the artists suffered for that, the old artists from the '50s. But the new generation of the '60s thought "We don't have to re-create a new culture,



Antonio Suarez, *Las Parcas #1, 1960*, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of Ontario

coming from the pre-war culture. We have to create a new one." For example, Equipo Crónica. Equipo — that's an important idea, collective. Collective groups that began to go against the idea of individualism, to go against the idea of any relationship with the power structure. "We don't want to be in the Venice Biennale, or the Sao Paulo biennale, we don't want to be co-opted at all. We don't want to be the

edge. We want be able make whatever we want."

It was what we call pop art, in comparison with American pop art. Deconstructing the idea of our cultural heritage, Velasquez, Goya, Ribera, big painters from the 17th century, Picasso. The regime was using that heritage. We have big painters, but they were becoming fascist, because they are used all the time by the regime. For example, I remember a painting with our Superman — we have a comic character that's like Superman (called Captain Trueno) — in the middle of the Guernica, killing everybody.

There were a lot of shifts beginning to appear in the culture. We can no longer say there is left wing, right wing; there is the market. And with the market, everything began to be fluid. In the '70s everything was radicalized, because with the end of Frankism, everybody was into the street, and demonstrations...

RW: I'm interested in that change. It surprises me that there was as much activity that was not traditional during this period. I had imagined the end of the Franco regime and the transition to democracy as a very abrupt and sudden break. But it sounds like maybe it wasn't.

JLM: Actually, it wasn't. Because there were two processes. First of all, the transition itself. The transition was made by the state. There was nobody to de-power. It was the state that decided, "We are rotten and if we carry on we will be killed. So we have to change, we have to transform the concept of the state and bring it alive again."

The Frankist state, was an economic power. Central banks controlled all the country. So if we think about the transition, we have to think about the economic transition, not only the political transition.

There were two movements. In '67 Franco appointed

Equipo Crónica, the two-man team of Rafael Salbés and Manuel Valdés, joined forces in 1964. They mutually conceived and executed each work, attempting to remove subjectivity by working from photographic images projected onto canvas, a technique that they pioneered because they could not afford to work with photographic silkscreens like Andy Warhol.

the prince Juan Carlos as successor of the state. Right now he is king. The transformation of the state was made by people at high levels of the state, bankers, big economic figures, really right-wing people. I can give you a lot of examples. Our ombudsman today was the Minister of Culture in 1951. The President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, was Ambassador from Spain to USSR. He was one of the promoters of the ghettos for gypsies and Andalusian emigrants in Barcelona. Today he is like our ambassador to the world. Yesterday I read in an Italian newspaper that he is being considered for the Nobel Prize. He is really dangerous, one of the most dangerous guys that Frankism created. No one has said anything in Spain about that. No one. Welcomed by politicians, by athletes, by artists, by intellectuals, by businessmen. He is perfect. It is some kind of incredible amnesia that the country has developed over the years.

So coming to the '70s. The main part of the working class in Spain was really poor at that time. First of all they wanted their jobs to be safe and then to have democracy. So it created something called apathy. Because when Franco died it was '75 and the oil crisis was in '73. So democracy was born parallel to the international oil crisis. So the first idea was, "I cannot lose my job. I need my two houses, I need my vacation on the coast or whatever." The state says, "No one is touching us so we can do whatever we want."

It is amazing that after a civil war and 40 years of dictatorship Spain had began a democracy in an incredibly soft way, with no violence. That's amazing. All the country wanted that — but at the cost of amnesia, of political anaesthesia. Because the people who ruled the country for the last 40 years could fit in some way in the new system of democracy.

A lot of artists from the '70s who were really politically committed, when democracy arrived, said, "Do you think it makes sense to go on painting police in the canvas, to go against Franco in the canvas since there is no Franco? What can we do? Okay maybe we cannot paint any more police in the canvas." They decided to paint themselves, renewing and reacting, and putting again all the problems from the '50s, individualistic painting, expressionist paint-

ing but legitimated because it was a liberal society.

The police, the real police, were able to change their clothes and begin to live in a normal way. No one pushed them, "Hey, you have to explain things!" That did not happen. People think that it was good because there was no clash. At the cost that the real policemen have the same rank as our ombudsman, as a lot of people in Spain, living quietly in incredible wealthy houses and ruling the banks they ruled during Franco. Art and politics are so linked that it is very difficult to make two different discourses.

Artists became de-politicized and de-ideologized after '75. Painters that wanted to go against Frankism began to be individualistic painters, making biographical painting, landscape, narrative painting. This was happening at the same time in Germany, Italy, the United States.

The most clear statement is that the man responsible for finance in the Ministry of Culture, Carmen Cimenez, said, "Today, when, fortunately, political art is out of fashion, we need to re-think the politics of art. That means individualistic painting." With a lot of single painters that wanted to be successful, it is easy to pick out several and present an exhibition — okay, the new painting! Right?

In a liberal society, they are not making political statements, but not because the State is obliging them not to do that, but because they don't want to do that. So in some way they are actualizing the problems from the 50s, from Tàpies, from Saura, who didn't make political statements because Franco was saying, "You cannot do that." But the new State was saying, "Well, you can do that. Ah, but you

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don't want to."

It is interesting to see the actualization of the paradox coming from the '50s into the '80s. We are free, finally. We have the right to make whatever we want, right? And with that right a lot of things will have been lost. So the concept of collectiveness and the concept of making the real cultural structure, an interesting grant system, technical assistance for the artists, and blah, blah, blah — ten years lost. All the people trying to exhibit in some gallery or trying to be picked up by institutions to be presented in an international exhibition. Okay, that's good for him but not for the community. There is no sense of community.

RW: And what happened?

JLM: In '79, several critics from Madrid decided to push the situation. They presented some exhibitions in Madrid, called "the New Painting." Right-wing critics, like Bonet — he wrote for some right-wing newspapers in Madrid and was curator of some Frankist artists and was quoting Frankist intellectuals from the 50s and 60s. In '79 he presented an exhibition called "1980," in a gallery in Madrid, presenting all the new individualist painting. I remember phrases like, "That's enough shit about politics in art. Art is art, and painting is painting, and you cannot relate painting with anything else than painting — art for art's sake." So '79 in some ways was a breaking point. Critics began to present exhibitions in two places, some galleries in Madrid and Barcelona, and an institution called La Caixa Institution.

Spain after 40 years needed a new image. What is the

new image we need for export and for import? What is our own tradition in painting? Rebel painting. The traditional concept, again, of rebel painting, individualistic painting, young painters.

Miguel Barcelo, 28 years old. The Ministry in '85 made him a huge exhibition in Madrid. In the catalogue, the Ministry wrote, "That's enough that our painters cannot enjoy their success in their lifetime." Miguel Barcelo was 28 years old. How is it possible to say

that? In their lifetime? I can imagine a lot of people who deserve that exhibition and were working in the 50s, 60s and 70s and they were 45 or 50 years old. They were great painters, big painters, but no, it was Miguel Barcelo, because Barcelo represents well the idea that the State has about the culture. Young, easy to export, easy to convert as a mirror for all the painters: "You don't have to think about collectives, about artist-run spaces, and all that shit. You have to think about how to become a real painter, to become successful, to have a lot of exhibitions..." Maybe they did not say that but they thought that, because they want you to be successful, because I can use you. Spain is in fashion again, with that kind of new painting.

RW: Now at the same time this was going on, was there government subsidy for the arts?

JLM: There was subsidy.

RW: Would you consider that part of the same process?

JLM: There was no structure for the subsidy. We have juries, but on the jury there is a politician. I have been on several juries, with critics and staff but also with politicians. I have been on some juries that when everybody has signed all the art statements, the politician adds a couple of names and erases a couple of names. I have been present at that. I am not inventing it. That is a real problem. Why politicians have powers like that.

Judith Sandiford: What is your involvement in the current scene in art?

JLM: I am a critic and I write for several magazines, newspapers and I give lectures. I was appointed in October 1991 as curator of a contemporary art space, Salon Moncada, in Barcelona run by La Caixa Institution. They invited me and I said, "Why not?" It was a good opportunity for me and I got my first big experience. I presented a project that was approved and so I became curator from October to August 1992. I presented several exhibitions. The first one was about three artists all together. "I think you are all connected, so if you are interested why can we not join together — four together and we create our own work. Not your work and your work and my work — just me constructing all the work and you constructing all the work like a real construction of discourse." It was really interesting. Personally I learnt a lot.

After we had a series of lectures about some issues.

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Rachel Whiteread, a young British sculptor. And a series of performances, because Barcelona lacks places to make performances because performance is nothing in Barcelona. So I decided okay let's go. It was very funny because the exhibition became very crazy. And what's that? Performances. (Names of exhibitors)

The final exhibition was Dennis Adams project in the East pavilion. Dennis Adams is an American artist. He was invited by Expo '92 in Seville. He presented a real pavilion, but a deconstruction of the idea of a pavilion. Normally the architecture of a pavilion at that kind of international event is like a big dome, the idea of the future, the idea of technology, creating a new society. So he built a pavilion with an inverted dome two feet high so people couldn't fit in. So people are just walking around because it is impossible to be in the centre because in the centre there is no space.

There was an East pavilion, recovering the idea, "What happened with countries that were formerly communist? What kind of pavilions do they have? What kind of identity do they have?" So he tried to build that and it was censored. I got in contact with him to present the pavilion show against the interests of my institution. We fought a lot with the institution, and I was censored. Finally, we won and the pavilion in the gallery was approved and presented. So it was a very interesting experience as a curator. Because I do not believe in the concept of being a curator for an institution you cannot hurt — you can't bite the hand that feeds you. I don't believe in that. If I work for an institution that pays me, I am absolutely right to go against my contract. I have some problems thinking that, but that is what I think.

JS: How active is the art scene in Barcelona? Are there lots of galleries? What range do they have?

JLM: We had a very interesting place called Metro-nome. A beautiful space run in an independent way, but it was a point that they needed grants from the government.

They applied for two grants coming from the local city council, and from the regional government, like Ontario Council, called Generalidad de Catalonia. They were fighting between us, because there was no money — they lost and it was too bad because it was one of the most important places that Barcelona had. We have a couple of interesting galleries, dealers like Carlos Poy and Benet Costa, people that don't believe in themselves, only the galleries, to construct some idea of community.

JS: What about artist-run spaces?

JLM: We don't have any.

JS: There are no artist-run spaces or government funded spaces?

JLM: Well, there is one called Artual, but we cannot say this is an artist-run space. Artists run the space, but we cannot say that there is a sense of community. That is different than having an artist-run space in Canadian terms. We don't have any interesting magazine in Barcelona. We don't have one, really.

JS: Is the situation in Barcelona similar to other places in Spain. I mean Madrid —

JLM: I haven't spent time in Madrid for a long time. I don't know. In Madrid things can be underground. The underground in Madrid is very important. But you need to be there to say that. And I want to be contextualized. I am from Barcelona and if I want to create something, I want to create something from the things that I know.

RW: It sounds to me as if you feel that in the '70s and '80s a movement started that you don't have a great deal of sympathy with.

JLM: No, I don't.

RW: Do you feel that there is a new movement starting up in Spain now and that you are part of that?

JLM: Young people have begun to be politically committed. We have the right to create our own culture and our own political statements with the money that we are paying to the State. Some people have begun to join

together to go against the construction of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona. Because it is a grand fiasco, with taxpayers' money.

JS: What is the matter with it?

JLM: Tàpies is represented on three floors. They wanted to build a big collection, right? How is it possible to build a big collection in the nineties, when a Picasso costs \$10 million, when a Tàpies costs \$5 million, when a Miró costs \$10 million or when Salvador Dalí costs \$20 million? And above all, when we have in Barcelona, a Tàpies foundation, a Miró foundation, a Dalí museum 100 kilometers away, and a Picasso Museum. We have the collections. Why create a new mirror of our own tradition, because we have four mirrors? A lot of people are suffering because they don't have money to survive. Why don't we invest money in that? And create a little structure.

In Guelph here, with 78,000 people more or less, they have an incredible space for video productions, unbelievable. In Barcelona, with several million people, we don't have one. We have some commercial video productions, for TV or advertising or institutions. Why don't we create a place for people that are interested in creating their own stuff? I don't understand that. Why buy a Picasso for \$10 million? For \$10 million I can make 1 million videos. You don't have to think about us as terrorists. Because it is our right. Why you are denying that? A lot of people at the beginning of the '80s thought that, but they shut up. People are beginning to think, "I don't want to shut up." They are beginning to mobilize themselves. For example, we are making a magazine right now. Let's see if it is possible to go ahead. I think it is possible, because we are not afraid. That is the main question, not to be afraid. Because no one is going to kill you.

JS: So what would your magazine do?

JLM: Criticize everything. Our interest is to make a magazine of cultural criticism. I'll give you some examples of what we are interested in. In Barcelona we have a prison called the model prison, built at the end of the 19th century, for between 2,000 and 3,000 people. Right now there are 8,000 people. Between 70% to 80% of the people inside the prison have AIDS. We are interested in publishing how it is possible to talk about the relationship between architecture and AIDS.

Or cultural investment in the country. Racism and advertisement in Spain, because there are problems of how black people are presented on TV. And censorship issues also and feminist issues. We are interested in deconstructing the idea of how design is understood in Spain. Design is just spectacle, right? Whereas design is how to build an ideological presentation. But let's touch wood because it costs, as you know very well making a magazine, the problems with the money, the problems with the distribution and circulation.

RW: We don't have very big problems about that.

JLM: You don't?

RW: Our magazine is not that expensive. It supports itself by its advertisers but we could put it out without them. If you are not interested in making money but in communicating, nobody can stop you. That's what we believe.

JS: Tell us about the trip that you are on now. Why did you come to North America? Where have you been?

JLM: I had a grant two years ago that they had to stop because I was appointed curator of that space. When I finished everything, I decided, okay it's time to go. I've spent three months here. In Spanish, we have an expression "hacer las Americas," to make the Americas. It means go to see the world, to make money and come back rich to Spain. I'm going back to Spain ruined, without a cent.

I needed to breathe. There is a moment that you feel constrained. I needed to go out. I am not obsessed with work at all, like people who just live to make money. So I say let's go and spend all the money I have, in New York. I spent three months there making deep research in several areas. And Katherine Crowston from York University invited me to give a lecture. One day she asked, "How many days would you want to be here?" I said, "One month and a half." She goes, "Oh, my God!" Because I think that Toronto is a city with a lot of information here, like in New York. There is a good process of production here. There are a lot of people working. There are a lot of magazines, a lot of very interesting things. It is very warm city, so you can relate really easily to people, maybe because I am from abroad.

It has been a very interesting experience to see a country that has an established cultural structure and see how it

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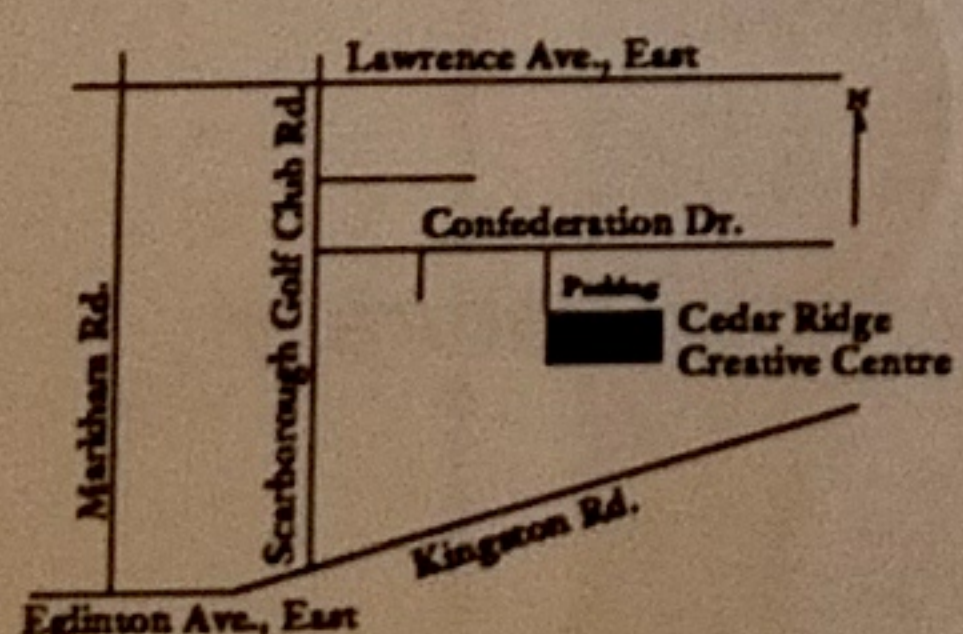
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works. I have seen a lot of problems also. To have a cultural structure does not mean to have a *good* structure. It is interesting to see the different developments. I have seen a lot of similarities between both countries. Some of the works of art I have seen are really remarkable, and some are really shit, as it were. But one of the ideas that is most interesting for me is the idea of fragmentation. People are afraid of talking about the nucleus of a piece, the whole system. They want to fragment reality and talk about details.

RW: That is very popular right now and I think there is a lot of energy in that idea. At the same time it can become a formula. It's an escape from actually committing yourself and making a statement. All you have to do is choose your favourite issue and fragment it without really committing yourself to what it is that you have to say about it. Do you have any response to that?

JLM: I think that the fragmentation of the system is political. And I cannot imagine another answer for that.

RW: I want to ask you about political art because you have an interesting perspective on it. One aspect of political art was the one you alluded to, socialist realism.

JLM: Not in Spain. In Europe, because in Spain it was impossible.

RW: The official line for the communist party was socialist realism. So that was a form of political art. And the American reaction at that time was apolitical art.

JLM: Exactly.

RW: But socialist realism was discredited, because it was a political art in the service of a political philosophy. Another political art, that started in 1968 as part of the counter-culture revolution in Europe, critized institutions but without having a specific platform. And there was another kind associated with the French philosophers, Foucault and deconstruction. So it seems to me that political art is not a simple thing. I would even say the futurists were politically committed. I always thought they were fascist right from the start. They almost spawned it —

JLM: Remember they said, "Women to bed, men to work and the new world will be created."

RW: So there are a lot of different ways of being political. So you were suggesting almost a simplistic kind of comparison between political and apolitical, but is it more complicated than that?

JLM: Well, it is more complicated. Political art has to do with the function of the artist. You can be just a painter, but you have to understand your own function as a painter in society if you want to be committed politically. So first of all it is a personal condition. Then it is easy to arrive at a community.

For me, political means, I want to be very clear on that, there is no mystification — there are good people and there are bad people and that's the classical way. Today we could say there are the people who are rulers and there are the people who are ruled. But within the people who are ruled are the people who *want* to be ruled and the people who *don't want* to be ruled. You have to make a decision which side you want to be on.

What happens is that everybody has to accept his own contradictions. Everybody is a whore. No one can throw the first stone. We have to accept our contradictions, our own doubts and to say, "Okay I cannot throw the first stone, but I want to throw a stone."

To accept that we are not pure any more and to say, "Let's think about the situation." Maybe I might make a bad thing one day. Can I think about that? If I was wrong, maybe I can think about why I was wrong. Not to accept that I was wrong, it's too easy. That is right-wing, to say I was wrong but I don't want to think about that. No, you have to think about that. To accept criticism. You say to other people, "Okay, what happened? What do you think about the thing I made? Do you think it is good, do you think it is bad?" Accept the contradictions and be critical of yourself. I think that is one of the most important ways. I don't know any other way personally. But not only in art. In the kitchen, in the bathroom, everywhere. ■

Memories ROY of KIYOOKA

by Milly Ristvedt

Photograph of Roy Kiyooka by Carole Itter from video
December 25, 1992 by Trudy Rubinfeld

There is no beginning and no end to Roy Kiyooka, so there will be no beginning and no end in the telling of memories of him. Roy would appreciate that. The perfect and magic circle, and the dynamic tension of complementaries, of opposites, within.

His images, in my mind, throw out a challenge to continue the job of transforming energy (or not to — the zen option). I will do what I can.

I see him disturbing the air around him with the sureness of his purpose as he walks. I have walked with him in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, and it has always been the same.

The air around him is not passive, to be ignored. He interacts with it in a dynamic way, creating turbulence and an eddying wake behind him. An active process, his walking, and filled with purpose and urgency.

I was a student of Roy's at the Vancouver School of Art in 1961-63. After a dry but thorough course in colour, I was given the space to discover how important the magic of it was to me in my painting. I know this about Roy (as many others do also).

He could open minds if they were at all willing. He introduced me to the poets. Rainer Marie Rilke he used to

read to his painting class. Earl Birney and the many others he brought to readings at the school. The composer John Cage and the choreographer Merce Cunningham. The Black Mountain poets, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, Charles Olsen, and more.

He teased me about being the gutsiest person with colour in class (my paintings looked like patchwork quilts) and later in Toronto, when he wrote a letter recommending me for my first Canada Council grant described me as "great, for a woman painter."

Nevertheless Roy, we were good friends through many years. He hired me as a model for his classes in Montreal when I was jobless and very broke, even though none of his students worked from the figure.

I have a wealth of memories of times spent together through the sixties and early seventies, but saw him only occasionally after. Our paths diverged as he rooted himself back in the west coast and I found it difficult to go back for other reasons, but I always loved and respected him for being the best teacher I ever had, and for being a phenomenal person. No past tense. Roy is still here. There is no beginning and no end. ■