

## **CENTENARY OF JACINT SALVADO An unforgivable oversight**

**Maria Luisa Borrás**

The centenary of the birth of Jacint Salvadó was in 1992 and in spite of the efforts of a group of citizens, including myself (and I must add that most of them were from the Valencian Community, always sensitized in matters pertaining to the arts), neither the administration nor any gallery showed any interest in commemorating the event in Catalonia. The truth is that in the obituary I wrote in my newspaper drawing attention to his death, which had otherwise gone unnoticed, in the little town of Castellet near Marseilles, where he was spending the summer of 1983, I called for a great retrospective exhibition of Jacint Salvado's work in Barcelona. The Generalitat even went so far as to include it in the programme of exhibitions for 1993, in commemoration of the ten years that had gone by since his death. But 1993 was a bad year, a critical year, and that was the excuse used for postponing the project, while of course the funds of the public treasury were used for other purposes, no doubt more important and urgent. First the opportunity of the centenary was missed and then the tenth anniversary of his death (we live in a society that seems to require anniversaries in order to pay homage to its artists), and the way things are going, we must presume that Jacint Salvado will go on being the illustrious unknown among Catalan artists for many, many years to come.

The entry about him in the Catalan Encyclopaedia, signed, by the way, by Bernot Hervás, says that on the threshold of the 20s and the 30s, when Salvadó worked with Derain and Picasso in Paris, he was considered to be one of the most important painters of his generation. He did not lose contact with Barcelona, however, where he had some very good friends, although he only showed his work in Paris. In the salons: Salon des Tuilleries (1924-1927), Salon d'Automne (1925-1927), Salon des Indépendants (1926-1960), Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1948-1956); apart from having participated, of course, in the emblematic Salon des Artistes Espagnols at the ieu de Pomme which took place in the dramatic year of 1936. Besides, from 1927 on, three years after he had arrived, he regularly held exhibitions in Paris every two years as is the custom in the city on the Seine: at the Bing (1927 and 1929), at the Worms Billiet (from 1931 on) and later at the Galerie Simone Heller. In 1973 Juana Mordo, always on the alert, held a Jacint Salvadó exhibition in Madrid and two years later another in Alicante. Then in 1979 the Galeria Orti in Valencia dedicated an anthological exhibition to him; these were the only three times during his life that his works were shown in the Spanish State. And never in Catalonia. A propos of the Madrid exhibition, Moreno Galván wrote: «Salvado was one of our artists who had been overlooked.»

From the point of view of his work, we must point out that there was first a radical rupture between two concepts of painting, between a strangely Germanic expressionist realism and also a rather brutal Permeke-style realism that in the 40s became a sort of painting moving within the orbit of neo-classicism to which he dedicated the rest of his life with extraordinary passion. If we look

close up at Salvado's work, if we study it in depth, the rupture does not seem to be so radical and certainly not unexpected or hazardous. In his realism, so geometrically structured, the seed of his radical approach was already present. Perhaps the most characteristic and yet surprising thing in the panorama of neoplasticist painting and the like in Salvado's use of colour. He treats it with an unprecedented exaltation so that it is remarkably different from the tradition of the Bauhaus constructivist painting and, of course, from Mar Bill, whom he so greatly admired.

He was an extraordinarily affable and outgoing man who, in spite of the many years spent in France, loved his country dearly and I can affirm that when someone made a direct reference to Catalonia in his presence his deep, tired eyes very often filled up with tears.

His conversation was spattered with remarks and sharp, interesting and often funny memories; he had a proverbial memory and sense of humour. His great humanity, both in the spiritual and in the corporal sense, undoubtedly contributed to the fact that his presence always made itself felt. He immediately became the soul of the party among people of all age groups.

Often included in that hodgepodge called the «Paris School», he committed a sin rarely forgiven by those lovers of the latest fashion: he was always true to himself and to painting. His work seeks the essential values and elements of art such as form and structure, rhythm and colour, at the same time as he avoids modelling or any kind of chiaroscuro and, of course, all anecdote, but rather proposes most convincingly silence and meditation, a profound reflection about the real essence of art.

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