

## Juan Manuel Bonet

It was Juana Mordó who introduced us to the name and work of Jacinto Salvadó (1892-1983). Juana Mordó first gravitated in the orbit of Eugenio d'Ors, Lain and Aranguren. Nevertheless, her name will always be associated with her efforts to promote new Spanish art from the end of the 50s onwards: the El Paso group, Fernando Label and his companions in the Cuenca Museum venture, Jose Guerrero, Antonio Lopez Garcia, Carmen Laffon. This exceptional woman still had time left over, however, to carry out archaeology of our avantgarde movements, to notice some of the pioneers of our modernity, such as Manuel Ángeles Ortiz, or Jacinto Salvado, who both shared the experience of being part of the Paris school. When he discovered Salvadó thanks to this great marchand in calle Villanueva, who organized two solo exhibitions of his work, the first in 1973 and the second two years later, Jose Maria Moreno Galván admitted, in one of his widely read chronicles in the magazine Triunfo, that he was 'one of our artists who had been overlooked'.

Born in the Tarragona town of Mont-roig, which automatically call to mind the peerless name and work of Joan Miró Salvadó studied fine arts at the Lonja in Barcelona, a city where he held his first solo exhibition in 1921 –apparently made up of postcubist landscapes and still lifes, although we have little information about it– at the mythical Galeries Dalmau, the same gallery where Miró had held his first solo exhibition just four years earlier.

At the beginning of the 20s, Salvadó, known in his home town as «Cintu Quadrus», arrived in Paris, just as the author of La masía had done before him and as Manuel Angeles Ortiz and so many others would do afterwards, attracted by the luminous example of Picasso, whom he was soon to meet and for whom he was to pose dressed as a harlequin.

The neo-classical Picasso, whom he has such direct contact with, and Andre Derain, of the same style, whom he also assiduously frequented, constituted a fundamental reference point in the Paris of that time for those who saw things in terms of retour or rappel a l'ordre, as was the case in the Rome of the Valori Plastici. We think of both these painters when we see some of the few really interesting paintings that are still conserved of the ones made by Salvadó in the 20s. Like the other Catalans Josep de Togores and Pere Pruna, with whom he had many vital circumstances in common, he did not go for the «fruit painting», whose main advocate was Boreas, which was followed for a time by Manuel Angeles Ortiz, but instead practised an art based on tradition, which, apart from responding to aesthetic assumptions of that decade, calls to mind one of the harbingers of that aesthetic, the above-mentioned Eugenio d'Ors, a promoter of noucentisme since 1906. Paintings such as La mascara del carnaval, El flautista, like that Cabeza reminiscent of Fayum's, Tres flautistas or El arlequín, are important examples of the poe-

tics of the early Salvadó, a poetics in which neoclassicism, of a post-Cezanne and post-Picasso style, becomes tinged in a way that makes it unique with half theatrical half ironical tones, sometimes even, as in the case of Personaje en el espejo (Museo de Villafamés), tending towards a certain expressionism, an overwhelming poetics which Maria Lluisa Borrás has very appropriately related with the Flemish Permeke.

In the Paris of that time Salvadó held a few solo exhibitions showing paintings like those I have just mentioned. Two of them, held in 1927 and 1929, took place at an important venue, the Galerie Bing. Then the Galerie Billiet-Worms showed his works. He took part in several salons, in several collective exhibitions at other galleries and, when the Civil War was just about to break out, at the exhibition of Iberian Artists held at the Palais du

Luxembourg in the spring of 1936. In those years he attracted the attention of critics as influential at the time as Waldemar George, a Pole by birth and the main promoter of pictorial neoclassicism in the French scene, and Wilhelm Uhde, a German, the first husband of Sonia Delaunay and the inventor of the concept of naive art. In his most important book, *Picasso et la tradition française. Notes sur la peinture actuelle* (Paris, Editions des Quatre-Chemins, 1928), in the frontispiece of which we can find his portrait painted by the artist from Malaga, Uhde includes Salvadó, in connection with whom he mentions Rouault and Spanish baroque and reproduces another of his paintings of flute players called *Jeune homme*, belonging to the Erik Charell collection in Berlin.

After a very essential series of *Mascaras* (1933) on paper, Salvadó's next metamorphosis was his conversion to abstract painting. For that conversion, of which certain 1936 monotypes and a painting as *Divertimento* (1937) are examples, it seems his friendship with Hans Arp was crucial, as was his admiration for Kandinsky's art and his long stay (1939-44) in Zurich, about which we unfortunately know very little, with the exception of the fact that he held a solo exhibition in 1944 at the *Galerie Eaux-Vives* and his relationship with Max Bill and other concret artists of that scene, in which as we well know some very transcendental things occurred for the future of European geometrical art.

In the Paris of the years after the Second World War, Salvadó was attracted even more strongly than in the previous years by geometry, the number, pure colours. His polestar in this regard was the aesthetic advocated by Auguste Herbin, a painter with whom our Eusebio Sempere had some differences, from the important platform of the *Salon des Realités Nouvelles*, in which Salvadó took part on several occasions. Most of those who have preceded me in the study of this work have referred to Herbin, among them Moreno Galván) in the above-mentioned article in *Triunfo*. In that line of «*Realités Nouvelles*», what is conserved of his production in the years 1948-51 can be included, among which we can especially point out excellent paintings like *Construcción en diagonal* (1949), *Ritmo y construcción* (1950) or *Equilibrio* (also 1950). In the years immediately afterwards, however, the painter was to reconcile this constructive baggage with certain figurative zones –his portraits of his wife Marcelle, dating from 1956– and also with a more signic impulse, which we can observe in a series of canvases and papers, very much abstraction lyrique –although construction is always present and finally the cubist weft– of the second half of the 50s and the first half of the 60s.

Confined in his workshop in the rue Saint-Paul in the Marais, or in his other summer workshop in Castellet, near Marseille, where he died in 1983, Salvadó dedicated himself once again in the last years of his life, which were the most fruitful from the production point of view, to the religion of abstract and geometrical painting. Like Herbin, like Otto Freundlich, like Kupka, like Alberto Magnelli, like Cesar Domele, like the recently rediscovered Esteban Lisa, Salvadó was a geometer who managed to combine rigour with freedom, spontaneity with discipline. He did not want a mechanical style, but on the contrary thought it was necessary to have a certain amount of craftsmanship, a certain tardiness, a certain vibration, a certain aura.

Magnetism in Salvadó's geometrical work. We think we know it, we think it has revealed all its secrets to us. We approach it again and we are once more charmed, we are again seduced by the above-mentioned craftsmanship, the magic of his radiant colours, among which red, yellow, blue and green stand out most, the arabesque of his rhythms and his composition with rectangles, triangles, rhombs, circles and ovals, the elementariness of his titles, which often –*Luz transversal, Cabeza, Naturaleza muerta*– brings us to the world of the real, as though to remind us that both in the Kandinsky and the Mondrian of the foun-

ding years, the very idea of abstraction implies starting from.

It was during the decade of the 70s that Salvadó's work began to be rediscovered. The first person to do so was Simone Heller, a gallery owner in the rue de Seine, one of the streets with the greatest artistic tradition in the capital of France. That was where I, just browsing around, saw paintings by this «overlooked» artist for the first time at the beginning of the 70s. That is where, according to all indications, he was discovered by Juana Mordó, thanks to whom, as we pointed out above, Salvadó was restored in 1973 to his native land, where solo exhibitions of his works were held in the following years in Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante and Zaragoza. (Another marchand who noticed his work around that time was Carmen Martínez, so decisively linked to the history of the IVAM.)

Barcelona, where the Sala Dalmau, whose very name is a tribute to Salvadó's discoverer, showed a selection of his work in 1994, will soon render official homage to the painter in the form of a retrospective exhibition whose curator will be Maria Lluïsa Borrás, and which will make it

possible to fix the profile of this work in which the primary complication is dating the pieces, and whose corpus, in which there are currently gaps such as the years in Zurich, surely holds many a surprise for us still. Valencia now anticipates this homage. We have Basilio Muro to thank for it, one who knew Salvadó so well, who loved him so dearly, who has done as much of this on his own accord to enhance his memory and his critical fate, who has now organized this well chosen selection in that very rue de la Seine style gallery he has recently opened almost in the shadow of the Micalet.