

*SELF PORTRAIT  
WITH LANDSCAPE  
(RAMON CASTAÑER)*



**PEPA BOTELLA**

Self-portrait with Landscape. Ramon Castaner.

---

The content of this book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without the prior permission of the issuer. All rights reserved.

Author: Pepa Botella Seguí

Editor: Ramón Castañer Botella

ISBN: 978-84-611-5631-3

Legal Deposit: A-146-2007

Printed in Spain / Printed in Spain

Photocomposition, Printing and Binding: CEE

Limencop, SL <http://>

[www.limencop.com](http://www.limencop.com)

email: [publicaciones@limencop.com](mailto:publicaciones@limencop.com)

email: [reprografia.elche@umh.es](mailto:reprografia.elche@umh.es)

Phone: 966658487 / 966658791 / 965903400 Extension 2784

This book has been prepared by disabled personnel  
belonging to the Limencop Special Employment Center.







*To Pepa, because without her this book  
would not have been possible, to my children and  
my grandson Sebastián.*

*Ramon.*

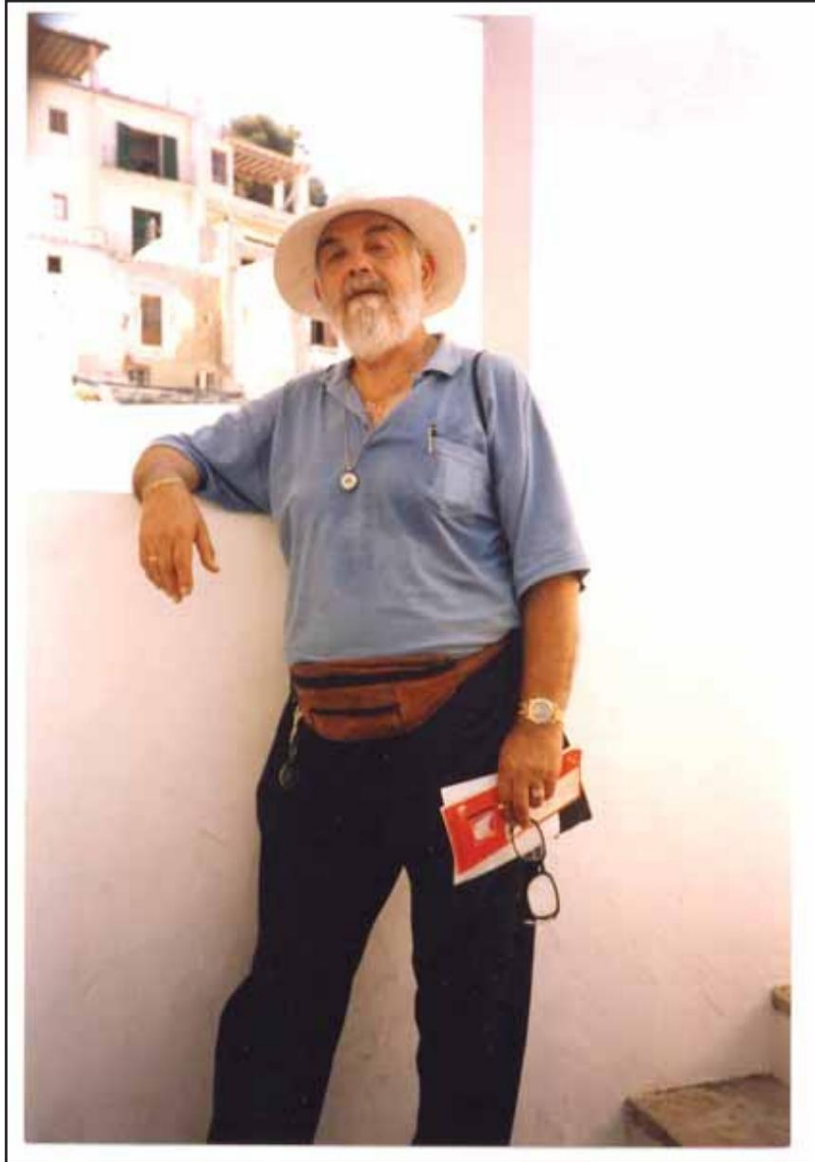


## INDEX

AS IF IT WAS A PROLOGUE.....	9
CHAPTER I .....	eleven
Childhood	
CHAPTER II.....	35
Youth	
CHAPTER III.....	55
San Carlos and the Mill	
CHAPTER IV .....	73
Altar of San Pancraccio The Wedding Murals of Santa María	
CHAPTER V.....	89
Paris	
CHAPTER VI .....	103
Our life in Alcoy Trip to Italy Transfer to Valencia	
CHAPTER VII .....	127
Our Son Opposition and transfer to Madrid	
CHAPTER VIII.....	141
Simancas Life Institute in Madrid	
CHAPTER IX .....	157
Exhibitions Trip to Germany	
CHAPTER X.....	171
Anthological Exhibition: 40 years of mural painting of San Juan Bosco	

CHAPTER XI .....	187
La Festa mural	
CHAPTER XII.....	205
Journey through the Catalan Romanesque	
CHAPTER XIII .....	213
abencerrajes	
CHAPTER XIV .....	225
The Petroleum	
CHAPTER XV.....	243
aggressive	
CHAPTER XVI .....	257
Present until 2007	
CHAPTER XVII.....	271
Flashes without continuity	
PRESENTATIONS AND PRESS .....	283
PICTURES .....	347





*Ramón Castañer – Ibiza 1995*

*Be foil the paper,  
tint the ink, the pen  
brush; God willing that my  
painting come out similar.*

*Calderon*



## AS IF IT WERE A PROLOGUE

Maybe two or three years ago, Ramón, he told me one day. I'm going to write my memoirs.

Ramón has an incredible memory. It amazes me. His memories are linked to each other. A song evokes a place, a moment and, as he says, a "click" connects him to a scene and he is able to reproduce people, objects, colors, as if he were visualizing them at that moment.

I had told him many times: –What a pity, that all those memories of yours are lost in oblivion!– He bought a

large squared ring-bound notebook and began to write, when he had filled the first notebook, he bought the second.

I was reading in those pages, the memories of his childhood, and I knew they were authentic because they hurt him. They hurt having to revive them. It is not the same to recount an event in a conversation, than to force yourself to be reborn in yourself those perhaps painful moments that mark a life. And I told him: -Leave it, it's not for entertainment. But of course, Ramón, he wasn't trying to distract himself, but to tell the truth, his truth.

Ramón is a very authentic person, very legal. Those who know him know that what I say is true, and it is because fundamentally, it is "in the good sense of the word, good."

Good son, excellent husband, I attest to this, and a good father. Simple, without presumption. Great friend, or indifferent to the one who is an enemy, (although I don't think he has them), but never spiteful.

He has a great will. Tenacious and sometimes stubborn, his opinions must prevail, but he does not impose them, he simply does not change his way of thinking, that is why he is independent.

He has a great sense of humor when he is in a comfortable environment, among friends or among simple people. But when the social circle is not conducive to him, he puts on his "antennas" and observes. Then his comments are witty, sharp and accurate. He is a good critic, not critical.

His passion is symphonic music. He prefers Debussy to Mozart, Ravel to Haydn, he likes to lose himself in the musical worlds of Cesar Franck, Berlioz, Albéniz, Respighi, Rachmaninov, Sibelius, Mahler, Strauss, Messiaen. When saturated with that music, the rhythms of Kraftwerk, The Beatles, Bernard Herrman, or Astor Piazzolla sound.

No. Painting is more than passion. It's your everything. When painting the mural of D. Bosco, he had a heart attack, I told him not to climb scaffolding again, but his response was hard on me. He replied that even if it cost him his life. After,

he still painted the great "Mural of the Fiesta", –and despite everything, I think he would still climb a scaffolding to face a large blank canvas, which he says is like a miura–.

Visiting an exhibition with Ramón is a joy, his great pictorial knowledge teaches you to value the positive or negative of a painting. Equanimous and fair in his judgments, and I have spent many years with a great teacher. That is why I dare to judge and say that Ramón is a great painter and an extraordinary draughtsman.

When he was very young he painted his self-portrait, it was 1949, he was in S. Carlos. He wears a wide-brimmed hat, jacket, and a white scarf around his neck.

Later, in 1956, his second self-portrait, was already a painter, with the palette and brushes in his right hand, –his image in the mirror is reflected upside down–. He wears a baggy sweater and mustache. His build has always been that of a large man, with the features of Clark Gable, rather than Gary Cooper.

And in 1993, in the "Mural de la Fiesta", it was painted on a camel, dressed as Abencerraje. And the outfit suits him well, because Ramón, with Arab features, must have some Moorish ancestry in his genes, and something remains in his character. Possessive of his own, refined tastes, protector of the family. He is not macho, he does not exercise arrogance over women. He is chivalrous and gallant with the ladies. Admire the beauty, the harmony. *He is simultaneously attracted to the countryside and the city, tradition and the future, he loves new art and is entranced by the old...* That's Ramón Castañer, the man, the artist and my husband.

Now, Ramón, has not used brushes or canvas, but the ballpoint pen and white paper and has made the most difficult and authentic portrait, because it is not the physical features but his life and his way of being that he has painted, and It has, no tweaks.

Pepa Botella

## CHAPTER I

*Your wedding was such a small  
thing in a world of feathers and  
tinsel that it's sad to think of you, a  
poor bride, a black bride, simple, different.*

*maria beneyto*





*Marina Segura Doménech – Manuel Castañer Abad – 1928*

Alcoy Thursday, May 17, 1928. Royal Parish of San Mauro and San Francisco. Four thirty in the morning, altar of the Virgin of the Holy Cave. The Revd. Mr. Luis Bosch reads the last warning: "Marina Segura Doménech, a 22-year-old native of Alcoy, single, and Manuel Castañer Abad, a 28-year-old widower from Alcoy, are going to enter into a canonical marriage. If anyone knows of any impediment, say so now, but shut up forever.

The bride wore a black silk dress with small beige lace appliqués and the groom wore a black suit and white shirt, over which stood out the black tie that Manuel would always wear as a tribute to his first wife.

There were few people in the church. Godparents and a close relative.

A tartan took them to the North Station, where the train that left at six took them to Valencia to catch the express to Barcelona.

At the end of the twenties, Barcelona was dazzling and made an impression on the newlywed that she would never forget. Buses, trams, black and yellow taxis, trolleys, people, bustle, women smoking in the street; large windows with the latest Parisian models, lace and chiffon dresses, adorned with sequins and feathers. Ladies' hairdressers where brunettes entered and platinum blondes with "garçon" haircuts came out, cafés cantantes with female orchestras to the rhythm of "Charleston".

Hotel Imperial, Montjuich and Tibidabo, Park Güell, Montserrat, Las Ramblas, and at night Barcelona Nuit, cabaret and Celia Gámez interpreting "La Lola", and at the Poliorama the great show "Metropolis" with the participation of more than a hundred artists. At the Lyceum "La Boheme". A whole resplendent world that astonished a recently married provincial.

Visit to the Casa Unicolor, where Manuel bought the pigments for coloring the raw



*Tibidabo - 1928*

materials of his business; the owners were German and they offered Marina a cigarette from a cigarette case, something that scandalized her: "in my town it is not well seen for women to smoke", –

he said, thinking, perhaps, that those gentlemen could have confused her with a "darling", since Manuel, fifteen months earlier, had introduced them to another Mrs. Castañer.

At the end of May they returned to Alcoy and settled on the third floor of number 63 Calle San Francisco, perhaps around this time I was already beginning to make myself felt. Some dizziness, some anguish and the visit to D. Joaquín Morrió, a doctor who had always assisted Manuel's family, who confirmed my

birth in a few months.

On Friday, February 8, 1929, at six in the afternoon, I was born and a few days later I was baptized in the Royal Parish of S. Mauro and S.

Francisco, being my godparents Pilar Abad Andrés, paternal grandmother and Eduardo Segura Pérez, maternal grandfather.

I keep some "flashes" from when I was very little: a small dining room, with a fireplace that did not swallow the smoke and the huge doll-faced ball that ended up wrinkling from the heat of the fire, a metal lamp with green cloth, a small balcony that received the dim light from the interior patio and in the bedroom the double bed where my mother breastfed me and the balcony that overlooked the street with the jug of fresh water.

The neighborhood was very close and sometimes they met on the terrace to hang clothes to chat and gossip. There were some porches with the water tanks and other storage rooms and in one of them we kept the pedal car, green patent leather, with black fenders and wheels with wooden rims and white rubber. My mother put a large basin where I bathed with sunny water.

The doorway of my house was between a tin store and the Trenzano shoe store, next to it the Bardisa grocery store and the small square of S. Francisco, with its large tree that sheltered the "Rullo" kiosk. Downstairs and next to the tin shop, Manolo's barbershop, where I had my sessions of crying my eyes out. Opposite, a shop with nickel-plated beds and a carpentry shop with a sawmill that gave way to a school, "Academia Politécnica", its director, D. Santiago, limped spectacularly.





*Ramon Castañer Segura - 1929*



*Ramón Castañer with his mother - 1929*



*Consuelito "the walker"- 1929*

### The Institute of Media

Education occupied, at that time, the place of the current market of S. Matthew. When exam time came, huge buses that transported children from neighboring towns would park in the square.

I keep some memories of my childhood so vivid that I can perfectly describe those buses with big wheels, and the spare wheels held on by thick nuts at the rear and the huge, round headlights. In some the oily motors with cables and belts were exposed, dripping oil that made a big stain on the floor, and I smell the strong smell of gasoline; I can evoke in my memory without any effort, the store of "El Globo" with its small window, crammed with toys, cardboard dolls, and tin cars. How many times have I stuck my nose on the dirty glass with small prints of other children's fingers, to

see the clay figurines of the nativity scene. There the "gazpachà", and the "Tirisiti" inn, with its red barretina, the evil Herod and above all, the figurine of the "cagaler". Perhaps the shapes and colors already left their mark on me, marking a path for me.

My mother looked for a "little girl" to take me out into the street, what they called a "walker", the girl would still be old enough to play with dolls and perhaps her family thought, "if she plays with a meat one and charges, much better".

Political unrest was in the streets and the days of the monarchy were numbered. The Jaca uprising by Fermín Galán and García Hernández, who were shot after being found guilty of rebellion in a court martial, was one of the cries that advanced the Republic. Alcoy echoed Jaca's. A general strike was declared and the Alcoyan workers took to the streets.

One of the days we were going to the park, when we arrived at the Plaza Ramón y Cajal, a vociferous crowd had gathered. Tricolor flags, banners, slogans and screaming requests. Suddenly, assault guards burst in, sabers in hand, on galloping horses. The mass overflowed and races began, shoving, stomping, lack of control. The girl got scared, took me in her arms and ran into the church of S. Francisco, sat down on a bench and began to cry. It was my first feeling of helplessness before something that for my childhood was overwhelming and I felt fear and loneliness. In the golden haze of twilight, the flames of the candles, the fading light of the oil lamp, the saints on the main altar, the scrolls and acanthus leaves, were inviting me to search, among their twists, for a safe hole. where to take shelter, where to hide, where to feel protected from what was threatening us. That search for a safe place to protect myself and feel a sense of protection has always been

with me, it is not that I consider myself an insecure person, but the rejection of violence persists in me.

One day my father told my mother in a solemn voice. "It is time for the child to go to school", I was about three years old, my father thought about the HH Marists. Haven't they closed it?, asked my mother. No, they've only been stripped of their habits.

The school took us like a stone's throw away. My mother put me in my Sunday suit, shiny shoes, and combed my hair, squeezing half a lemon on my hair, which after two minutes was like metal spikes. My mother, recently in mourning, in black, a gauze cloak down to her feet, shook my hand and we went out. We were there in a flash. Right at the entrance there was a door that read "SECRETARY", he called, we entered and spoke with the director, D. Florencio. She filled out a form and since the children were in the yard, since it was recess time, he himself took me to join them. I didn't like meeting new people and I stayed at the patio door watching the kids' games. I saw piled up some bulrush chairs that belonged to a small room on the top floor, which served as an assembly hall, chapel, and theater. I took one of them and sat down. The bell that indicated the end of recess rang, the shouting stopped and slowly the patio became empty. I was left alone, a little scared, but the minutes passed and no one noticed me, at half past twelve classes ended and they all left in droves, I joined the crowd and went home. My mother asked me how I had been, and I replied, "Very well." At three in the afternoon I went to school and repeated the operation, took the chair and sat in the same place. I didn't think anything, I just felt restless, like someone who is doing something that is not good, but at five in the afternoon I joined the crowd and happy and liberated I went home. I don't know how many days that lasted. I did not understand how no one noticed my loneliness, perhaps the only explanation, which years later I found, is that the school had, at the back, a goal run by two old men. Perhaps they thought that I was a child who had been punished, and the priests, that I was some grandson of the goalkeepers. The reality is that it was like that, nobody asked me or asked me for explanations.

One morning it was raining heavily, my mother said she would accompany me with an umbrella, we went out into the street, I stuck to her and thinking that I could discover the place where she spent hours. We arrived, we pushed open the heavy door, I went in and turned to say goodbye, but my mother didn't move, suspicious of my nervousness, she pretended to leave and hid. Seeing myself alone, I took the chair and sat down as always, but the rain splashed on me, I got up to take shelter and at that precise moment, the door opened and the image of my mother appeared. To me, he seemed enormous, his figure black and with the umbrella dripping. "Is that what you do here?"

For the moment, that fantastic place collapsed like a house of cards that crushed my freedom. He held my hand squeezing very hard, so much that it hurt, and we went to tell my father, but he didn't flinch, he took it as a joke and said: - talk to the director and tell him what happened;- so it was. A Marist took me in his arms and lifted me up to a class, I with my cry knew that at that moment my world of dreams, chimeras and white clouds was vanishing. And so my **"aeio u" began**. They gave me a syllabary, a blunt pencil, a notebook that on the back cover had a silhouette of children that formed a ladder of heights; years later that drawing was replaced by the multiplication table. The teacher D. Rafael Pérez Canet, taught us to read, write, count and to know that the world was round like an orange.

My first Christmas was coming, the first congratulations to my parents. Memory

perfectly that embossed cardboard that had a beautiful colored nativity scene and a dedication that we wrote taking our hand by the master, finished off the set with a little blue cord that doubled the cardboard. Since they were always in mourning at home, they celebrated the holidays with little joy, but my parents liked the congratulations and thought that the boy was learning at school.

At that time I enjoyed looking at the nativity scene of "El Globo", and I invented a fantasy world, I went inside the cave, I climbed on the sparkling star that hung by a thread, I bathed in the rivers of silver paper and fought with the evil soldiers who killed the children. How much I would have liked to have a nativity scene, but in my house they were always in mourning.

One day a schoolmate told me that he had a very large nativity scene, we met on a Thursday at noon since we didn't have classes in the afternoon. I lived on Calle de S. Miguel, and when I saw that nativity scene my jaw dropped, camels, horses, multicolored lights, real water that formed a waterfall and real wheat. When I realized it was three in the afternoon. I started running home and that day I received my first regulation beating. I never forgot. That friend became a priest and I never told him what his nativity scene brought me.

At that time we changed apartments. My mother, taking advantage of the fact that the school was much further away, and perhaps also, to avoid events like the previous one, found me a woman who accompanied me to and from the school. My classmates were making fun of me and I really had a bad time, not only because of the lack of freedom but because I had to submit to the old woman, since she was a very old woman. She was dressed in the old style of the town, a long skirt, a cord at the waist held up by a bobbin toothpick, and a little woolen shawl, not very clean. Old pious, we went into the church every day to visit. I did not understand it, because there was no one there to visit. It took me a long time to understand that. I also remember that a canon from the Parish of S. Mauro and S. Francisco died, and that woman insisted that we go and see his corpse. I had never seen a dead person. I was inside the coffin, dressed as I had seen the swordsmen in the time of Don Quixote, a book that my grandfather had and that he gave me to review when I got bored. It caused me a strange sensation, since his face had the same color as the candles that were burning.

Things were getting more complicated, each time I had to submit more to his will. What to visit Mrs. Rosita, a very old and very rich spinster; to go see his brother who was in the asylum; than to water the pots of a lady, since she was sick in the hospital.

One day, when they were messing with me and the old woman at school, I, not to offend her, but to release my adrenaline, said not very pleasant things about her. Inventions that freed me from his oppression: that he pissed on himself, that his head was full of lice, that he let loose some foul-smelling farts, and naturally, after two days the tip-off was withering.

The old woman, naturally, was furious and went straight to tell my mother, and immediately said goodbye to the services.

Without meaning to, I was free again, but that freedom had come at a price, and it hurt.

-Tomorrow your mothers that dress you well handsome because a photographer is coming!-. It was the first of the many photos that were taken over a few years – now, when I'm writing, I look at one of them and I don't know if I remember all the names, but I do remember all the faces. In the patio, in front of the stairs that went up to

In the gallery, next to the urinals that serve as the background, they put some benches so that the students, some standing and others sitting, formed the group. The smallest on the ground, and there I am, the first to the left of the viewer. (Some may still have the photograph from those times, but if not, you can see it on page 148 of the book “**Alcoy 1881 – 1980**”, the Marist school year 1932 – 33).

And to name a few names, starting with my row: the Úbeda brothers. In the next row, Bernabé Cano, the Vilaplana brothers, Paco Cardenal, Enrique Pascual.

In the third row, Lacedón, Juan Payá, and Linares; in the fourth row Mr. Rafael Pérez Canet, the teacher, holding Narro, José Gisbert (Toté), Ferri, López; And already in the last row, the first from above, Roma, Escoda, Juan Fluixá, and Enrique Blanes.

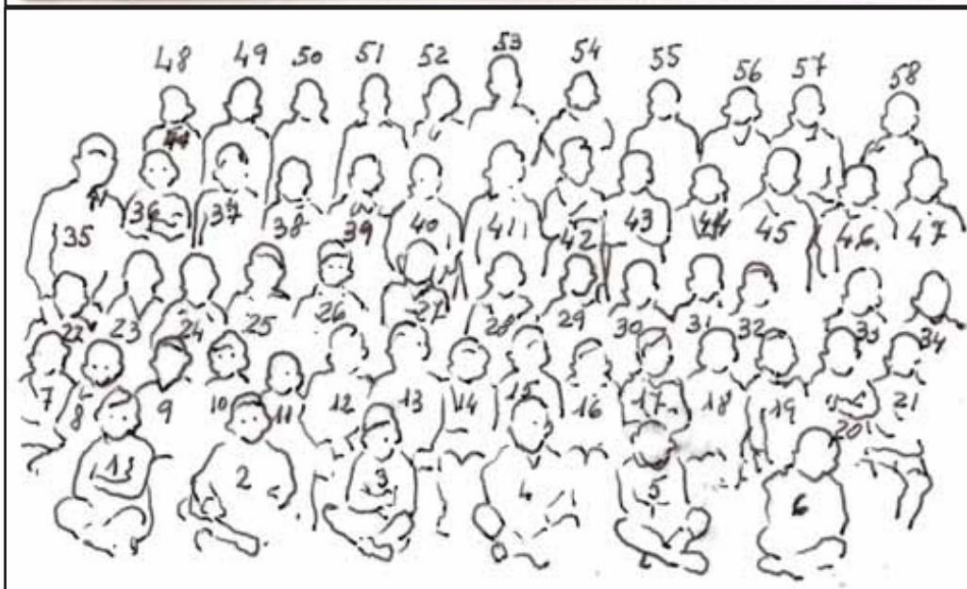
This photograph was followed by others and other groups, at various times, and the well-known photo of the table, the student sitting with a book, the world globe and the World Map in the background.

My father, back in 1933, bought a radio set. My mother did not like it because she said it was an offense to the deceased in the family. It was an Emerson, it had the shape of a chapel, the wood was cut into three holes that revealed the reddish-toned upholstery that covered the speaker, and it had three buttons to operate it. One for the connection; the central one to move the dial, which was an amber celluloid circumference, where the names of the most important stations and their frequency appeared; and the other button, for volume. I soon taught myself how to drive it. As soon as he got home from school, he plugged in the device and searched the dial until he found the local station, “EA J-12 Radio Alcoy”. At noon it only broadcast two or three hours. The broadcast began with a march. –a kind of hymn dedicated to Mariana Pineda, which narrated the feat of having given her life to embroider a flag of the Republic–. Later, the rhythms of the time and the tangos of Carlos Gardel.

There were already commercials, I loved the one that narrated a shipwreck in which everyone could be saved by the light of a lighthouse that illuminated the sea. To end with the ad for *El Faro dry cleaners, careful services, fast dyes for recent mourning, Embajador Irles street*. Then the youthful voice of Carmencita Aubert sang some South American type melodies. The local and national news followed, ending at three in the afternoon with the “Himno de Riego”. My father would quickly unplug the radio so as not to hear it.

In 1935 the film *Los Crímenes del Museo* with Fay Way and Glenda Farell premiered at the Teatro Principal .

That girl who was walking me already had a boyfriend, one day they came home to visit and to distract me they took me to the movies. I have never, in all my life, suffered such a trauma. The images struck me in such a way that for many years they have been part of my nightmares, those wax figures that were bleeding, the burned and deformed face of the protagonist and that tragic ending.

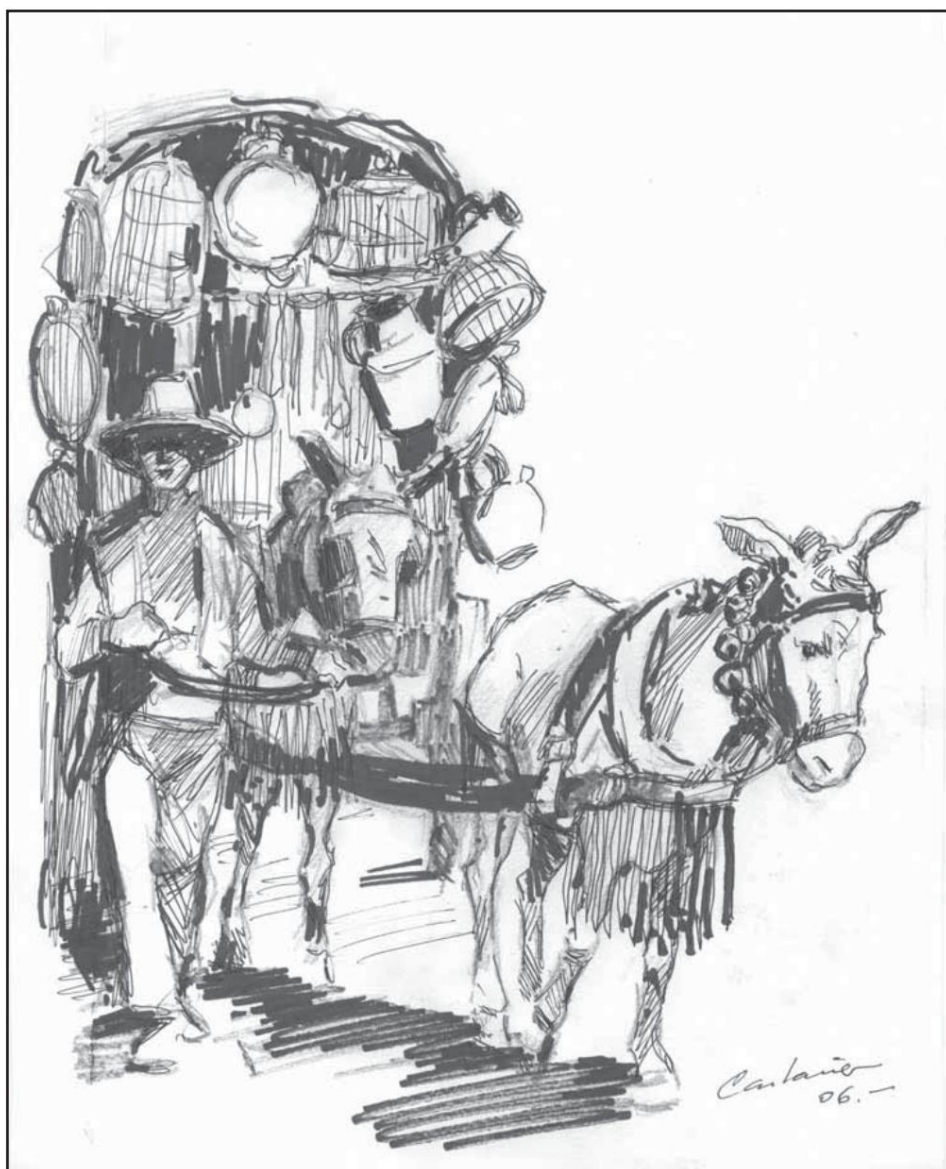


HH College. Alcoy Marists – 1932.

- |                        |                    |     |                       |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Ramon Castaner      | 16. Juan Vilaplana | 17. | 31. Llorens           | 46. Ferry          |
| 2. Úbeda (the largest) | Verdu              |     | (Correct)             | 47. Lopez          |
| 3.                     | 18. F. Cardenal    | 19. | 32.                   | 48.                |
| 4.                     | Enrique Pascual    | 20. | 33.                   | 49. Rome           |
| 5.                     | Vilaplana          | 21. | 34.                   | 50. Escoda         |
| 6. Higinio Ubeda       | 7.                 |     | 35. Mr. Perez Canet   | 51. Serrano        |
| 8.                     | 22. I narrate      |     | 36. J. Gisbert (Tote) | 52.                |
| 9.                     | 23.                |     | 37. Ferrandiz         | 53. Juan Fluixá    |
| 10.                    | 24. F. Lacedon     |     | 38.                   | 54.                |
| 11. Bernabe Cano       | 25.                |     | 39.                   | 55.                |
| 12.                    | 26. Juan Paya      |     | 40.                   | 56. Silvestre      |
| 13.                    | 27.                |     | 41. Steve             | 57. Enrique Blanes |
| 14.                    | 28. Linares        |     | 42. Surgery           | 58.                |
| 15. F. Vilaplana       | 29.                |     | 43.                   |                    |
|                        | 30.                |     | 44.                   |                    |

From that time I keep images and even the voices of the street criers, who with their shouts and singsongs of typical lyrics drew the attention of the neighborhood. I can see the large wagon of the "cullerotoero", pulled by two mules with harnesses and bells around their necks and fly-scarring ribbons on their pectorals and buttocks. On the wagon hung pans of all sizes, bird cages, tin jugs and flasks, wooden spoons and ladles, tongs, pokers, braziers with their cylindrical chimneys, and all kinds of baskets and baskets. During the march all the junk collided with each other, forming a great racket from which the shrill voice of the high-pitched cry of the carter stood out.

*The cullerotoeroo  
dons baixeu,  
baixeu pendons,  
pells de conills i  
rosegons  
¿Què no em sentiu?*



She bought old rags, rabbit skins, and crusts of dry bread.

Another town crier was the barley water vendor, whose silhouette on the street was very typical. They looked like Chinese transporters. A very long stick on the shoulder from whose ends hung the ropes that held, on one side, the basin with water and several glasses swimming in it and on the other side, the ice cream maker with the barley granita and the measure to fill the glasses.

When they passed by a public fountain they changed the water, washed the glasses and to walk again with his singsong. *Barley water, five cents a glass.* Among the spokesmen in the street were the umbrella stands. Almost all of Calé race. They knocked on the street gate and sang.

*Do you have any broken umbrellas to fix, and any  
old ones to sell?  
I also buy them.*

So many street characters that illustrate my childhood world: like the sharpener with his spark wheel and the celluloid pipe. The tinner, so distant from today's world, who tinned pots and pans. And the typical taffy seller, who with an old donkey and saddlebags full of jars slowly sang the announcement of his sweet merchandise. Their song cut through the warm air of the September evenings, announcing the golden fruit of the golden autumn.

At the beginning of 1936, a group of children was formed in the Marists who had to prepare to take their first communion.

My father flatly opposed it, arguing that he was too young for that, but in reality, the political situation, the social unrest and the anti-clericalism of the moment and the connotation of my father's Falangist "José-Antoniano" did not allow him to signify himself with a son receiving communion. in a Catholic school.

My mother fixed the problem, told my father to stay in the background and she took care of everything. The economic situation of my house was not at all buoyant and the expense was reduced. My mother made me the suit. In my souvenir photograph I am dressed as a little sailor, with a navy blue suit, gold buttons and lace, patent leather shoes, a very simple little book with a metal closure in my hands and leaning on a prie-dieu, a backdrop with a faded angel in an offering attitude. And I keep one of my reminders, which reproduces in black, a very large image of Jesus, and a very small boy dressed for communion, the text says.

Receive Oh my Jesus! my angel heart, to  
be able to offer you a  
saint's heart

*memory of the  
First Communion  
of*

RAMÓN CASTAÑER SEGURA Student  
of the HH Maristas  
College of Alcoy  
Held on May  
21, 1936  
in the chapel of S. Miguel





*Ramón Castañer – First Communion*

The mass, which D. José Arnauda officiated, was celebrated at ten o'clock. We made up the group of about 15 children. Naturally, my father did not attend the ceremony; my mother told me that she would stay behind at the back of the chapel, but that I should not turn to look at her, I could not resist the temptation and I think my mother appreciated it.

There was nothing else, no banquet, no sweets, no extraordinary food. I wore the suit two or three Sundays, there was almost no time for more.

When I was little, the non-school afternoon was Thursday, it was considered that it was just the weekly intermission, and on Saturday we had morning and afternoon classes.

On those Thursdays, theaters took the opportunity to show children's films: El Gato Félix, (the parakeet cat, as we called him), Betty Boo, with her big head, cuddly and flirtatious, a little naive, -was she the predecessor of Marilín? ?-, Popeye the sailor, with Rosario, Simpleton, and Cocoliso. Sometimes they showed comedy movies with Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, Tomásín, Charlot and later the Fat and the Skinny (Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy)

The cinemas were packed and the stalls became a meeting place, where people went, not just to see the movie. As if they were part of a show, the ladies took off their coats and stood up, leaning on the back of the previous row, to see and be seen by the public, until the room darkened.

We saw all the films, both Spanish and foreign, in Alcoy at least two years after their premiere in Madrid.

I remember one time, when friends were queuing up, - "Cleopatra" by Cecil B. De Mille, with Claudette Colbert, and Henry Wilcoxon, was premiered in Madrid in 1934 and arrived in Alcoy in 1937-; the queue was very long, and we saw a friend arrive, we called him, "Quiquelo, come here, you have a place", but he very proudly answered us, -jo vaig a *butaca de pati*- and someone answered, -*Hey, Quiquelo, how rich are you*-. That phrase stayed with us like a catchphrase, to this day, and we usually apply it when someone flaunts something.

Among the films that impacted me from that time I remember: "The Sign of the Cross", with Fredic March, Claudette Colbert and Charles Laughton, above all, because of the fight scene, in the Roman circus, of the warrior women with some dwarves.

Spanish films such as: "Rosario la cortijera", "La hija de Juan Simón", "Nobleza Baturra", "Carmen" with Imperio Argentina, films that formed the group of so-called "Spanish", and that on occasions, when the public did not like them, they booed them singing: What beautiful paintings / how beautiful they are / *in four bobaes/ mos deixen ballons*

The second version of the "Reina Mora", according to the work of the Quinteros, premiered at the Principal Theater at the end of 1936 or beginning of 1937. Halfway through the film there is a Holy Week procession in Seville. The audience in the theater reacted violently with shouts and whistles. Another film with great memories was "El negro que tenía el alma blanca", the first musical film of Spanish talkies, with Antoñita Colomé and Marino Barreto. The scene in which someone places a record on a wind-up gramophone, a fox-trot sounds and the protagonists appear dancing on top of the record, so diminished in size that the record serves as a dance floor for me, was very impressed with me.

One afternoon, the teacher told us that classes were suspended, the political situation was very tense, that we should go straight home without having to spend time because they had to close the school. García Hernández street (S. Francisco) in its last section. Since I lived on Fermín Galán (S. Nicolás) street, I skirted the Institute on S. José street and went up the S. Mateo hill, I went through the roundabout, from where the smoke could already be seen, and I approached the gate leading to the church. They were burning S. Mauro and S. Francisco, I saw a crowd of spectators who shouted encouraging those who threw all kinds of objects, images, paintings

and liturgical ornaments, I was impressed to see a recumbent Christ fall and hit the ground and his head was torn off. Through the trees, which were already turning green, I saw my mother leaning out of the balcony of my house, I started running so that she could see me and calm down.

With the burning and demolition of this church, Alcoy lost one of the great jewels of the Spanish Baroque.

July 19 was a Sunday, I heard my parents arguing, because my father wanted to join those who were going to lock themselves up in the barracks. I didn't understand anything, my father left slamming the door hard. In my house there was silence for three hours, the time it took my father to return. He had met some friends on the street who dissuaded him from his idea.

Every day he brought bad news: –The parish has been looted. They have burned the image of Saint George. They have arrested such a priest. They have killed so-and-so. There are so many prisoners in jail.

One day some men with rifles came to the house and took my father away. They put him in the jail that was in the Ramón y Cajal square and they told my mother that she had to bring him food, she prepared a basket in which she included cutlery, but she soon returned, she came crying with the broken dishes and the scrambled basket. At the register they yelled at him angrily and threw everything on the ground, because metal cutlery was not allowed. The next day, my mother repeated the operation with a wooden spoon. I did not understand anything.

My father was there a few days and then they transferred him to the Checa who was in the Church of the Handmaids.

After a month, my father entered my house. I didn't understand anything, I had only noticed his absence.

In August they arrested him again and this time they transferred him to the province of Alicante, but he was there for a short time. They found no charges against him and they let him go. My father thought that, to soften his political situation, they should welcome a refugee child from Madrid and bring him home to live with us.

One day they told him that, in the old Paulas school, they were delivering the children to the families that had requested them. It was late summer, my father and I went there, a great crowd of people had gathered in the patio, the afternoon was golden and a pearly dust seemed to cover that environment; there were many, many boys and many girls, with a red scarf tied around their necks with a hammer and sickle at the end. A voice called out the name of a child and the name of the family that welcomed him and they went out together; A little while later I heard: –Manuel Castañer Abad– and my father came forward, and –Jesús Martín Martín– and a boy from the group came out, my father held out his hand, looked at me and we headed home. For me that had been a strangely festive evening.

Jesús was five years older than me, he was not very tall, with very white complexion and very black hair; Three other brothers came with him: José, the eldest, was the delegate of one of the centers where the unfamiliar children stayed; His sister, Luisa, stayed with a teacher and his other sister, Elena, with a soldier who lived near us.

The kid was very smart, life had not treated him very well. In my house food was beginning to be scarce and my mother had to figure out how to get by.

The Revolutionary Committee had seized my father's business and he I worked in an office of the Textile Union, at 40 Anselmo Aracil street.

"Is your father a facha?" I wondered. I didn't know what he meant, but his dismissive tone made me understand that this was something bad, so my answer was no.

Yes, yes, -he insisted-, your father is ugly, when at night I get up to pee, your father hides with the radio under a blanket and listens to a station that gives ugly slogans.

At times it was insulting, "I don't like this coat your mother has sewn me at all, you see, now I'm tearing it up," and it would tear a lapel.

He was very successful with the girls, he always had a hold on the waist, his love ran through the entire social scale, as in the Tenorio. One day, point blank, he told me.

-Do you know what fucking is?- Well, I'm going to tell you, if not, the day you get married your wife will tell you "fuck me", and since you don't know what it is, you'll make a fool of yourself and she told me. from "pe to pa". For my seven years, that was a flash, a secret of something ignominious that I had to keep without telling anyone; I remembered that years before, a friend who had many siblings, told me that children come from the mother's womb, and one day, while my mother was dressing me, it occurred to me to tell her, as if it were a discovery she was unaware of; the slap that he gave me spoke louder than his mouth, so while Jesus was revealing to me, in a dirty way, the world of sex, I thought, if that was worth a slap to me, with this he will kill me and I never spoke to him about it again. issue.

Around this time I started drawing. Everything I saw in the movie "The Sacred Arrow" I tried to capture on the pages of a notebook, Indians, horses, wagons. Jesús, when he saw me draw, he got the urge and we made bets to see who could draw the fastest, -now a car, and a bird, and an airplane-, in the end we ended up fighting or laughing. During the month of

November, some militiamen came again to my house and they took my father. Jesús, he kept repeating to me, "you see, you look as if he was a face", but one day, Jesús Martín told my mother and me that he was very bored and that he was going to live with his brother.

We never saw him again, nor did we hear from him again.

Some memories are recorded in such a way that you don't need to evoke them because they remain intact and I can even visualize them. When I write now, I see my father on the truck, covered with a blanket. They had told my mother that the prisoners would pass by my house to take them to the Alicante Provincial, and we, while the people shouted in the street: *shoot for the Carrasqueta!*, we were on the balcony, with the blind rolled up, behind the windows, to hide our presence and I saw, and now I see my father, on the truck, covered with the blanket, raised his hand to say goodbye, covertly.

The street of S. Nicolás, (Fermín Galán, during the Republic), is smoothly pine, and quite long, if we divided it into three parts, we could have formed, then, three groups of different social and political significance.

In the first part, a Catholic bourgeoisie was located, -the house of Puigmoltó, that of the Marquis of S. Jorge, Cabrera, the Círculo Industrial, the Carbonells, López and

He sang – approximately until 107. This bourgeoisie was the one that the anarchists included in their anti-clerical cries. Down with the twelve o'clock mass!

From the Sastre pharmacy to the tobacconist's, middle class families with Catholic trimmings; and from there, until the end, a diversity of proletarian people, affiliated with some left-wing party.

My grandmother lived, almost at the top of the street. I remember that my mother had taken advantage of the communion suit, cutting off the legs, so that I could wear it every day. When I visited my grandmother, the kids on the street called me "holy", and told me, –"the car with the skull will go for your family"–, but despite everything, there I made a gang of occasional friends and with them I became a street kid.

We played in the demolitions of the church of S. Francisco, we looked for gold stones, which we called the pieces of golden marble; We went to the movies, we slipped in when we could, with a lightness that the doorman never noticed. We saw the premiere of Cecil B. DeMille's "Cleopatra," with Claudette Colbert and Warren William; "The Mummy", by Karl Freund, with Boris Karloff; "The Merry Widow" by Ernst Lubitsch, with Jeannette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier.

That communion suit saw many things with me. In the Calderón theater they premiered the magazine "Las Guapas", and one Sunday we sneaked into the "gallinero". The theater was packed, sitting very tight we watched the development of the plot and towards the middle of the show, the "vedette", Pepita Huertas, and the chorus of dancers, performed the chotis "Las Peliculeras", the audience broke into warm applause and at the insistence, they had to repeat it, the enthusiasm lasted so long that a backdrop appeared with the lyrics of the chotis and the public began to sing:

*Oh! movie,  
moviemaker, moviemaker,  
I want to be, I want to see  
myself on the screens with Fred  
Astaire and Charles Boyer I  
will be until I die a movie, moviemaker.*

The final apotheosis has arrived. Some backlit spotlights, some curtains and a silhouette of a woman ascending some stairs to the beat of a "fox-trot", and suddenly, total darkness, a screeching of curtains and lights at full power, and there she was, splendid. in her nakedness, the star of the show, and the audience erupted in a delirium of bravos! and some foul words.

The sailor suit, which I wore for the first time in my first communion, had fallen off some of its gold buttons with an anchor, the collar was rubbed and it had lost all its significance. Now, with me, he was already a "son of the people."

My real neighborhood stretched from the Round Fountain to S.

Buenaventura, going through the Glorieta, had a lot of friends there. Some have already died, some I have lost sight of and with others we continue a friendship, ties of union that time has sealed as in a crucible: Antonio Revert, 65 years of friendship, almost like brothers, how many things have we experienced together, How many have we shared: childhood, youth, time as girlfriends, married, children and grandchildren.

Other friends were Fabián Company, Bernabé Cano, Luis Aracil, Ezequiel Picher, Enrique Pérez, and some girls: Iris, Ritín, Elena and Elisa. With all of them are my memories of games in the Glorieta: the "matute", with the marbles; to the "unemployment and

shot", to the "churro"; with them my memories of the snack of bread with oil and paprika, liquorice and "cañamel". A whole world that only exists in memory.

My mother was able to put me in a children's soup kitchen where the lunch.

"Don't you dare say that your father is in jail. Your father is in the front," he told me, and when I returned he asked me, "Tell me, how is the church?" Czech and now children's dining room.

—There are no saints—, I told him, —there were some long tables, and they gave us some wooden spoons and chickpea stew and later a banana—. My meals there were short-lived, every day the fear of being asked about my father grew in me.

One day my mother told me, "I'm going to Valencia to see your father, you'll come with me because I'm sure dad will be happy." I didn't sleep that night thinking about the trip. We get up with the moon, we get dressed and the North Station; I fell asleep on the train and woke up almost in Valencia.

Yellow trams with a very long pole, lots of people everywhere, a wooden bridge, the Liria station with the narrow-gauge train and the two tickets to Andilla.

My father was in a labor camp, the 5th Fortifications Battalion. My mother talked to some guards and they put us in a checkpoint, they told us that at half past twelve the prisoners would come back to eat. When the time came, they took us out into the field through a back door and told us to wait there and watch them go by, but not to approach them or speak to them.

After a while I saw a platoon advancing, red and white striped suits, shaved heads and hoes or picks on their shoulders. I didn't know which one was my father, they all looked alike, skinny, dirty and decrepit. My father recognized us and made a hidden gesture to indicate that he had seen us, I remembered his goodbye on the truck. It would be a long time before I saw him again.

Back to Valencia and the train. It was already dark when the train glided wearily through the plains of Alcira, suddenly, the people crowded around and began to say, —A turkey!, A turkey!—, indeed, they were planes that were flying over the train. Suddenly everything became daylight, some flares were slowly descending. They all ran inside the car, running over each other to jump off the train. My mother caught me and we jumped, ran and took cover in some urinals, the explosions of the bombs began to sound, my teeth were chattering and fear had me paralyzed. After a while, there was silence, the train whistle blew announcing its departure, and we ran towards it like the rest of the people; but the plane came back, people were scared, we all ran to hide again, but the explosions of the bombs sounded very close. My mother threw herself to the ground and put me under her, I almost suffocated, but through the hole her body made I could see the fires and the people running madly. I felt the taste of earth and the panting of my mother trying to cover me as much as possible.

When we returned to the train we were suspicious, no one wanted to get in for fear of a repeat attack. When the train left the station towards Játiva, the lights from the fires illuminated the night and the faces of the people in the windows. Cries were heard and names were repeated looking for each other, it was complete chaos.

For many years, those distorted images appeared in my dreams in terrifying nightmares.

The Paulas school became a national school and they called it "La Pasionaria", where all the children of the neighborhood were educated. My teacher was middle-aged, blonde, I remember her wearing a blue knitted dress, high-heeled shoes and sometimes scratching her sex, my friends and I laughed on the sly at that gesture. The director, a mature man, with white hair, I think a naturist, would gather the little ones in the patio and teach us the hymn to Valencia, we repeated each stanza tirelessly.

That fountain, which one day had a Miraculous in the center, witnessed what bad we sang

May 1 was a holiday and they gathered us in the Plaza de la República. Cheers, down and out, all the slogans were mixed with the sounds of:

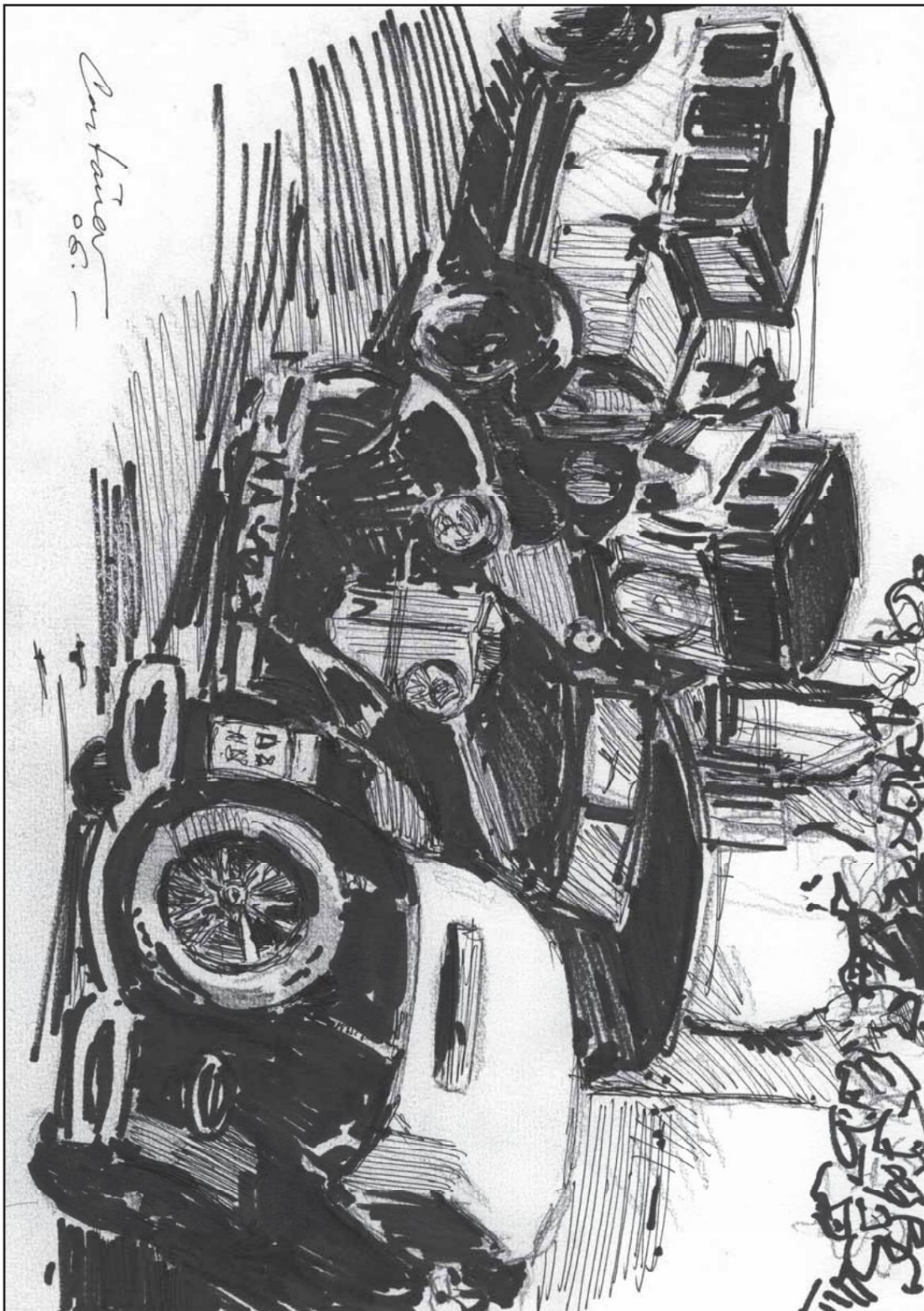
*Children of the people who oppress  
chains This injustice cannot continue...*

Then, two by two, they took us back to school and gave us books. I barely knew how to read, I had lost what the Marists taught me, I would have preferred a toy, but they gave me "**The Visit to the Bell**": the story of a boy who became very small and was taken inside a bell, and They were explaining to him, with illustrations, what the contact was, the resistance, the mallet, the bell... and the other book was "**Historias del Conde Lucanor**", but my mother said that it was very green and he shouldn't look at it, so so you saved it.

The economic situation of my house became very difficult, in the absence of my father. My mother had to find a home job, what is now called the underground economy. In a graphic workshop they gave us envelopes to make, a metal template, a bottle of glue and two brushes, they explained how we should do it. I learned early. That was my first job. He would take ten of those sheets and slide them one over the other, until a centimeter was left exposed. He glued the protruding parts and one by one separated them and spread them out to dry. The paper was very bad, it had a dirty greenish or pinkish ocher color, then with the metal template in the center, the ends were folded, glued and the envelope was finished. We made bundles of fifty and when we had finished the batch we returned them. They paid very little, but something was something.

I missed class a lot, we played hooky very often; naturally, my mother did not find out; We were going to see the "Swedes hospital". I knew that area very well since before the war, my grandmother lived for two years on Paseo de Amalio Jimeno, I remember the fantastic automobiles, "Chevrolet", "Graham Paige", "Blitz", that I saw parked at the door of "Lucem Park", (Alcoy's casino); sometimes, a blonde leaned over the railing of the terrace smoking, and that was a reason for scandal and rant for us.

But now, the casino was closed and there were no cars, no lights, the war had censored roulette wheels, green rugs, blondes and liquor; Also for me, he had censored the toys, but not my imagination, so I tried to build them for myself. With cardboard boxes, a bit of ingenuity and glue, I began to draw a kind of plans of the different parts of the car: the engine, the cabin, the windows, the body and the wheels; then I would cut it out and assemble the pieces, it is true that the wheels did not roll, they were glued to the chassis, but with enthusiasm and a lot of fantasy, my cars rolled at a hundred per hour.



*Cars in Lucem Park*



On September 20, 1938, I felt the house shake, it seemed that the neighbor was dragging the sewing machine down the hall, but a brother of my mother came panting and told us that they were bombing, that some planes had dropped bombs on Alcoy and there was talk of many deaths, women above all, in the "Mistera" (the match factory); and that another bomb had fallen near the Infantry barracks, and there was talk of others in Aljezares. That day fear took over the city. My mother's family came to sleep at my house, because if something happened, we would be together. The next day we had the same feeling of anguish, but as the hours passed without any alarm, people calmed down. On the 22nd, people began to work and my mother sent me to class. I had been going to some private classes for about 15 days at the house of a Marist, in S. Mauro street, who gave lessons to trustworthy children, so they wouldn't report him. Truly, I don't know how my mother had tracked it down. His name was D. Ciriaco, and he was a good person.

That day I arrived at his house, sat down, took out the notebook and began the dictation: ... *the soldier went to the hostelry and rented a room for the night. He had dinner and went to bed, but not before telling the landlady to wake him up at five in the morning...* .

At that moment the siren that warned of a bombing began to sound shrill. I jumped up, and the Marist sister told me that downstairs, there was a cellar that served as a refuge. I went downstairs, jumping two steps at a time, came to a small patio and saw people going through a narrow door.

It was dark inside and I couldn't see anything, but I knew there were people. I do not know how long it was. The siren had stopped sounding, when a silhouette was silhouetted against the light, it was my mother, we hugged and suddenly bombs began to fall on the house. The flashes came in through the door and small pieces of debris fell on us from the ceiling. After a while, which seemed like an eternity to me, the cessation sounded, syncopated siren sounds to warn that the danger had passed. We went out to the patio again, a door was disengaged and people were going through it, we went out to a barbershop, "El Buen Tono" all the mirrors were broken, and the floor and the armchairs full of rubble. We went out into the street, the sun hurt our eyes. People ran wild; Another bomb had fallen on the house across the street and half of the façade was missing. Some mattresses, twisted iron, hung from a balcony, a child's tricycle hung from the wires of public lighting, everything was full of rubble, pieces of the facade, wooden beams, ruins everywhere.

My mother and I went down towards the square, S. Mauro street was also full of collapses, we turned around "Libertad" street (S. Lorenzo), and towards the end we saw a thick column of smoke rising over houses. The doors of the shops were bulging out of their guides and showing enormous bellies.

There were many people, some were crying, others were hugging. When we arrived at our house, my mother's family was waiting for us and there the tears and hugs were repeated, at that moment it was agreed to leave Alcoy.

I don't know where we were going, but we took the road to Cocentaina. As soon as I left Alcoy, my mother met a friend of my father's who invited her to take refuge in a little house that he had in S. Cristóbal de Cocentaina, "Vistabella". When we got there, we were astonished to find many other people who were also there for the same purpose, and little by little, they distributed us, they distributed some mattresses on the floor and in the morning we collected them and each one worried, as it were, about look for their own food. they planted evil

time, good face, they told piquant tales and sang and laughed; I was "the child who watches", without understanding anything.

One day the news spread that the worker who did not fill his position lost his job. Many young people took the train to return at night, but one of the girls, about 18 years old, dark, tall, so full of life that she brightened up small nocturnal gatherings with her presence, did not return in the afternoon. That day we had heard the sound of the sirens, the noise of the anti-aircraft guns and the rattle of the bombs dropped on Alcoy. Hours passed and with the absence of the young woman the anguish and restlessness of her parents grew, who stayed awake that night, waiting until dawn. When the father went down to the station to catch the first train that would take him to Alcoy.

He did not return until the next day. But when we saw him go up the hill, sunken and broken we understood that it returned alone.

The meeting with the family was something I will never forget. She told what had happened to her daughter, but between her crying, her screams, her rage and despair, we did not understand what she was explaining. A bomb had destroyed the body of his daughter, whom he recognized by a piece of her blouse.

That day I didn't feel hungry, it was the first time I saw a man cry at the top of his lungs. It would take a long time to forget the scene.

The stay in that house lasted many months, we were cold, very cold; hungry, very hungry; hardship, many hardships. We ate twice a day.

My mother went away very often to get food in the towns on the Valencian shore, and I stayed with my grandmother, who was already beginning to show symptoms of paraplegia, and with one of my mother's sisters. We lacked everything. One day the firewood we collected from the terraces ran out and I decided to ask for an axe. I climbed up the mountain, towards "el cremat", and I chose a pine tree, not very big, of course, I cut it, I chopped it up and with a rope I made a sack that I carried on my shoulder. I came home with my shoulder almost raw. Days later an idea occurred to me: I went up the mountain, chose a pine tree, this time thicker, and cut it down. In the lower part of the trunk I made a groove and tied the rope so that I could drag the pine tree down the hill. That was very funny, the top of the pine in its drag raised a cloud of dust and sometimes I had to stop, because the weight of the pine almost ran over me. When I got home I walked in like a winner, and everyone was amazed to see that a 9-year-old boy had been able to drag such a big pine tree. The next day I chopped it up, and into the fire! As the pine was green, in its slow and hissing combustion, it released a quantity of smoke that the chimney, unable to swallow, spread through the rooms. Irritated eyes were watering and we smelled of smoke. The resinous flame of the pine stained the pots with a greasy soot that was difficult to clean, but we had a fire and we kept warm.

One day, an old woman, one of those who lived in Vistabella, took the ax and went up the mountain, perhaps she could not bear that a nine-year-old boy brought those pine trees, without anyone's help. And to the mountain that left! The day was decreasing, and the night was appearing little by little, until the shadows swallowed the whole landscape. The old woman's family began to get restless and at eleven o'clock at night a group went out in search of the woman. People were shouting his name and the echo repeated it. Finally, they found her, numb with cold and trembling with fear and, moreover, without a pine tree. I saw that group of shadows come in, arguing and quarreling with the old woman, and I felt an unhealthy joy, seeing that they didn't bring pine.

The next day, she and the old woman's family left on the train to Alcoy, And in Vistabella, my family, I, and the pine forest were left alone at my disposal.

Some families returned to Alcoy, and one day my mother came and told me that we were going back home, my father had been released from jail and he was waiting for us. When I got home, my father was there. I hadn't seen him for almost two years and he seemed like a stranger. We hugged and I could see that his bones were on the surface.

Our reunion did not last long. After a few weeks, my father told us that they had called his country house, the one on 21, and he left to enter a CRIM that was on the Molinar road. Shortly after, he told us that his replacement was being sent to the front, they would leave at four in the afternoon, on a special train from the North Station.

That day, at half past three, my mother and I were already there. There was a large contingent of troops on the platform, and a sergeant, with a hoarse voice, was singing the name of the soldier and he got on the train. Suddenly, it rang: Manuel Castañer Abad, the name hung in the air, with no response. The sergeant repeated the name again, and no one answered.

My mother told me that most likely he had hidden and that's why he wasn't there. We left the station worried, and we saw my father going up the hill, wearing a coat, a soldier's blanket, a khaki backpack, his old beret and calmly eating a large cone of dates. At our insistence that he run, he told us, "Calm down, I'm coming." We returned with him and saw him get on the train. The engine blew its whistle, the wheels screeched, the steam hissed, the wagons clicked as they moved, and I saw my father waving to us from the running board, I saw his blue eyes, his starving face, and again, his hand he moved to say goodbye.

I didn't see my father again until a few months later, after the war was over.



## CHAPTER II

*And a whole children's choir is  
singing the lesson; A thousand  
times a hundred, a hundred thousand,  
a thousand times a thousand, a million.*

*Antonio Machado*

*Ivonne de Carlo  
was technicolor in  
her lilac outline, the heart  
mouth, the heart bust, the heart  
panties stood out in the dance of  
Scheherazade*

*M. Vázquez Montalván*



Concentration in the Plaza de la Constitución. Men and women, blue shirts, red berets, arms raised and singing *Face to the sun with the new shirt...* It was April and the "Year of Victory" was beginning.

It took my father a few days to return home, it must have been quite a while, because my mother and I were worried, but he arrived, and that day the war ended for us. us.

One morning my father took me to what used to be the "Lucem Park", because there was the "Youth Front", to sign up for the Falange, there were three categories, according to age, Pelayos, Flechas and Cadets, it corresponded to me be Arrow.

On the railing of the terrace, where I saw the blonde women smoking, they waved three flags: red and gold, that of Spain; the Falange flag, black and red, with the yoke and arrows; and the white one from Requeté, with red blades.

Without realizing it, I went from singing *Children of the people who oppress chains...* to *Spanish Youth descended from Fernando and Isabel, the Empire of arrows, yokes and faith has been born.*

In the month of November the mortal remains of José Antonio Primo de Rivera were transferred from the Alicante prison, where he had rested in a common grave, since his execution, to Madrid. The Government promulgated the order that he was transferred in a coffin carried on the shoulders, with a procession that accompanied the funeral entourage. To this end, the stations invited the people to put hangings on the balconies with black crepe. In Alcoy, the City Council dressed its balconies in mourning and the city, almost en masse, seconded the proposal.

On the morning of November 20, my father went to Alicante, to the exhumation of the remains of the founder of the Falange, together with other people from the Party. My father told me that I would go with him. I attended the moment in which the remains placed in a coffin were carried on the shoulders to start the long journey. It was already dark when many voices sang the *Face to the Sun*, saluting with their arms raised, while the flares and the torches of those who accompanied the entourage formed a great multicolored smoke, on which the enlarged and phantasmagorical shadows stood out. live to Spain, which was, one, great, and free, that pilgrimage was undertaken that would last several days.

After the days of official mourning, the funeral hangings were disappearing from the balconies of Alcoy. All but one, the one in my house. My father solemnly said that that hanging would remain on the balcony until José Antonio rested in Madrid, and it was done. The days went by and that thing remained on the balcony, but after a certain time it began to be commented on by the neighborhood: *My goodness! Well, they have taken it hard.* The sun, the rain and the wind took care of turning the white yellow and the black pale, but there they remained undaunted. My mother no longer wanted to look out on the balcony. When José Antonio's coffin arrived at the Escorial, where it would be buried, then the balcony of my house was stripped of the attributes that had adorned it for eleven days. And people's comments and jokes are over.

My father, after the war, thought of looking for a private teacher for me, I hardly knew anything, but that good teacher had the patience and the wisdom to

start from the beginning: reading, adding, subtracting, dictations, a bit of geography, a bit of Spanish history. At that time I started with the drawing fever, I drew not on small sheets, but on cardboard size. I copied "Las Meninas", by Velázquez, a stagecoach, "The tragic end of Sinchariscuno". I endlessly drew caparisoned horses, saints, virgins, designs for our Moors and Christians Festival, and I began to paint in oil. I didn't like brushes and I painted with my fingers, I made terrible messes, my parents were fed up because at home I stained everything. I discovered pastel painting and dedicated myself to copying prints from various painters. My parents did not give much importance to that artistic hurricane, they considered it, rather, an entertainment, since while I was painting, I did not do anything.

antics.

In June, my father took me to the recently merged Luis Vives Academia Tecnos school and registered me for the high school entrance exam. And the day arrived, for the written and oral exam. First, division of a figure and a dictation, then the examination with the court: the Hail and the Creed, with the priest; some history and geography questions, and after an hour they gave you a printed card, where the word "Apt" appeared.

One Sunday afternoon that summer, with saunic heat, I went out from my house to go to the movies. In the Ramón y Cajal square I saw a crowd of people in which there were many Sunday soldiers: white gloves and buttoned legis. With childish curiosity I made my way through the crowd and there, in the middle of everyone, like a dazzling star, was Teresa, "Crazy Teresa", as all of Alcoy called her. It was impressive!. She was wearing a black chiffon suit from the twenties, which she had surely been given as a gift. The black chiffon left her well-shaped quadron body transparent, without extreme shapes, sensual and attractive. On her head was a hat with a black feather that covered half her face and she wore high-heeled patent leather shoes and on her shoulders a boa with languid faded feathers and a packet of peanuts in her hand. With feline gaits she was throwing the shells in an indifferent way, while the whole world looked at her in astonishment. A municipal car soon arrived and, covering her with a blanket, they led her inside, ending that unusual and tremendous spectacle. It was the first time he had seen a naked woman.

That summer my father fixed up the factory floor, and there we we move in the canicular months.

The factory was huge and I knew very well all its passages, nooks and crannies and unexpected places. A nephew of the manager, Juan Jacarilla Chafes, and I invented our games. We made wooden swords and drum covers were our protective shields. In any pile of rags, pieces of cloth appeared that we turned into warrior capes. And our fantasy transformed the wooden trestles into spirited medieval horses, to organize our imaginary combats.

We climbed on top of the sacks full of wool fluff, which weighed up to 80 kg, which were piled one on top of the other, and we moved swinging, until we undid that mountain that was falling noisily, with us in the middle.

When the manager heard the noise, he would run after us to punish us, but our legs were like lightning and we were safe.



In the month of September, and in the same secretariat as when I was a kindergarten, since the building was the Marist school, they formalized my registration for the first year of high school.

The first course was mixed, boys and girls in the same class and a teacher for each subject. There I met Pepa, then it was Pepita, who would later be my wife.

I was a bad student, in the explanations of the teachers, I got lost in a world of fantasy and made-up stories and I dedicated myself to drawing, cartoons, jokes, boats; On the other hand, Pepa, was very diligent. When they asked him, he knew everything, and as in list order behind B, comes C, it was my turn, Castañer, to present the topic after Botella, and he didn't give a damn. Of course, in the drawing class he was the best, I made the course sheets in no time, and I copied from life all the casts of faces, eyes, ears, reliefs of leaves and geometric figures, which hung on the walls of the drawing classroom. He made covers for half a class, for the geography album, for the notes on History, and those on Literature, which D. Rogelio dictated to us.

In the 3rd year, we were separated in the classes and the girls went to the Paulas, but we didn't lose contact completely. At school festivals, Pepa came to recite, even then, she spoke poetry very well, and she participated in the charity festivals that were organized for the reconstruction of the temples. I didn't miss one; I enjoyed when she acted. I remember one Sunday morning that there was a concert by La Primitiva, a music band to which her father was closely linked, out of affection. The Band had won an award and they had to honor it. He left

Pepa to recite, she was a beautiful doll, she was wearing a light blue organza dress, white socks, and her blonde hair, loose and curly. I was trembling in case he was wrong, for me, he was already a special little person, and I was unable to retain two words in my head.

I admit that I have always been a bad student. But it didn't torment me. I didn't like studying and it didn't cause me any trouble. Perhaps my sensitivity as an artist already lived with me. I got lost in ethereal worlds, I only thought about drawing, playing, going to the movies, having dinner and going to bed. Feeling the contact of the sheets, more than cold, icy; cover my head and feel how the heat emerged in my body. I would get up almost dawn, to see if it had snowed, because classes were suspended with snow. But the disappointment of a clean, blue, bright sky told me that I had to resign myself and go to school, which was, for me, a huge slab that crushed me.

At school, one gets used to it. The routine of so many subjects, some that I did not understand and nobody explained to me; other repetitive, pounding: *Miño, Duero, Tajo, Guadiana and Guadalquivir. Obi, Yenisey, Lena and Amur; Aptera, Diptera, Coleoptera... ; Ataulfo, Sigerico, Wamba, Teodoro...* -Does anyone know the list of the Gothic Kings? Very good, for Wednesday, 50 times.

*Rosa, Rosae; Populus Populi; Dies, Diei; Sensus, Sensus...* "Saint Thomas Aquinas. The mute ox, whose bellowing will be heard by the whole world."

*"The same benches, the same tables, the same teacher, some yes, others no.*

*Some will shine like stars of the first magnitude, and others will crawl like snakes.*

*-Bonjour monsieur le professeur. Voici the class. Voila the table. Je n'ai pas la plume-*

Literature, mathematics, Greek, German. Everything was getting into my head, which seemed like a full sack. But in drawing class there I felt at my

wide. He drew quickly, and he solved everything with ease. Another song was line drawing.

I had several friends who got together depending on the occasion, Salvador Pastor, Fernando de Gracia and I, we would meet at Tito's house to study, we would start out very serious and formal and we would end up doing wrestling. All three of us were fat, and when one was knocked to the ground, the house would rumble loudly.

Mondays to the movies. Main Theater. "Two movies. Two", there we saw María Montez and John Hall: "The Thousand and One Nights", and "La Esclava Blanca", and "El Ladrón de Bagdad" by Sabú; "The Wizard of Oz" by Judy Garland. Sonja Henie's films, and Kristina Söderbaum's "The Lake of My Dreams", "The Dream City", and "Blotted Footprints"; "The Iron Crown" by Luisa Ferida and Gino Cervi.

We would queue up, get tickets and buy peanuts and lupins, and enjoy.

Other friends were Rafael Blanes and Rafael Gosálbez, we would meet at Gosálbez's house to listen to symphonic music: Debussy, Ravel, Mozart; Gosálbez had a wind-up gramophone, and we spent our good musical moments there. From time to time, we would put on a small disc of danceable music, –which was fashionable at the time–: *"If you want me to love you again, speak French, learn English..."*, (*International Rumba*) or *"Alegre el black claps his hands from his rustic vantage point, while the ship pitches cutting the sea towards the beach..."* (*Palma Brava* by Bonet de Sanpedro); "In Shape" and "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" by Glenn Miller; and the Sisters Andrews, who sang, "Aurora"

There were very ingenious people who invented jokes and spicy phrases, like this: *"Miss Cifesa, if you play Movietone for me, and Paramount plays it for me, I play Metro Goldwin Mayer. Ufa, you did not give me the Fox"*. And in science class, with the words that designated the units of electricity, we used to say: *"Miss Ampere and an Ohm, met in the street, got into a Watt and touched the Coulomb"*.

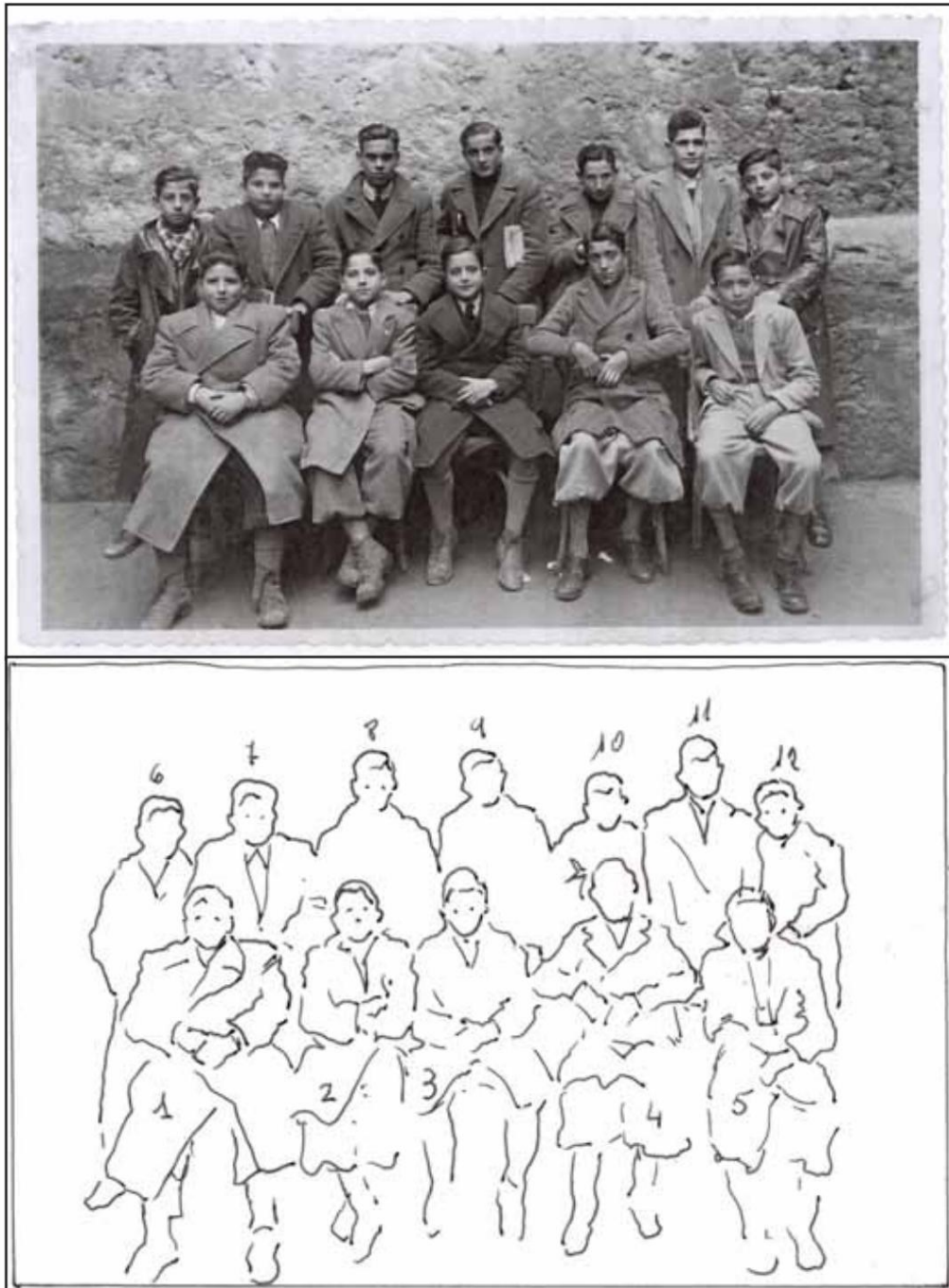
In those days, when I was a high school student, you could pass the course for compensation, the subjects with a score of less than 5 points were compensated with those with the highest score, if the total score reached or exceeded 50 points; but if you did not reach the minimum of 50, the subjects not approved, that is, with less than 5 points, were repeated in September. I failed all seven math courses, but since I got a 10 in drawing, I never had to show up in September.

In drawing, at the end of the 1st year, we bind the sheets to present them for the exam. I went home very happy with that album, which I still have. My parents were happy and considered it normal for me to draw that.

A few weeks later, at my parents' house, a gust of wind broke a window and a carpenter had to be called in to fix it. When the carpenter came, I remember his name was Esteban, the drawing album was on a chair, he noticed it and took it to look through it. He called my mother and asked her who had drawn that. My mother told him that it was me and that I was 12 years old.

Esteban told my mother that it was a pity that my intuition for drawing could be lost, that he had a friend, the painter José Mataix, who could perhaps give me some drawing classes to teach me better. My mother told him to

I would tell my father and they would tell him the agreement. Naturally, my father objected, and said "he who paints stick figures eats stick figures".



*Luis Vives School – Tecnos Academy.*

1. Salvador Pastor Roca
2. Rafael Blanes Llopis
3. José Nake
4. Camilo Pascual Olcina
5. José Ivorra Martínez
6. Luis Aracil

7. Fernando de Gracia
8. José Doménech
9. Vicente Serra
10. José Gilabert
11. Carmelo Vicent
12. Ramón Castañer Segura

The news filled me with joy and my mother told me that she would try to convince my father

He'd better be at home drawing and not go to billiards or ping-pong. Overall, it's not that expensive either! The teacher will come every day and that way we will have it under control.

And little by little, my mother, with her reasons, convinced my father and he spoke with D. José Mataix, they agreed one day to come home, I showed him the drawings, the school ones and everything I had painted at home, oils and pastel drawings. Everything seemed fine to him, but he told me that we had to start from scratch, that is, drawing with a graphite pencil. My heart leapt with joy. He opened a portfolio, took out some sheets, and told me to copy them, without rushing, without rushing, paying attention to what I was doing, they were folio size. He told me the paper I had to buy, the number of the pencil, a soft eraser, a wooden board covered with packing paper, and let's draw!

Every day of the week at seven in the evening the teacher was at my house. It was the time of electrical restrictions, and some days I corrected my drawing by candlelight.

When you have finished the five sheets, come to my house and I will give you another five. I drew trees, with and without leaves, dogs of different breeds, silhouettes of Silenus, drawings from the twenties, a Roman forum, a tennis player, a wedding photograph. Little by little, the drawings became more complicated, a festoon with fruit and cherubs, others with flowers and leaves, the head of an old friar. He taught me to draw the nib technique with Chinese ink, it was a very nice drawing and it was insinuating and the gradations of shadows were achieved by joining the small lines of the hatching. That's how I drew, two village bullfighters, the presidents in a box, horses, picadors and fighting bulls, all in the style of Casero.

The months went by and each time the teacher was more surprised by my way of starting the drawings; If it was a figure, I would start with the feet, if a landscape, I would start with the last term, and the good thing about it was that the drawings fit me perfectly. He taught me to center the drawings, –Where is the central point of the figure? Trace the diagonals of the sheet and you will have the central point to frame the figure, the composition or the landscape. That would never forget me.

After some time, he taught me to use the charcoal pencil and the blenders, and the trick of softening them with a hammer. –You don't have to use the pure black of the pencil, nor the white-white of the paper, you must get the gradations of light and dark so that the drawing doesn't look hard–.

My puberty was appearing. I remember that on the factory floor, where we used to spend some summers, one day I saw my father hastily hiding something he didn't want me to see in a cupboard on the desk. The table had three drawers, two on the sides and a larger one in the middle, and below the side drawers, a cupboard on each side. After seeing how my surprised father put something away, I became obsessed with finding a way to open that closet. I tried several times, but there was no way, my father had everything well locked. I have always thought that behind me I had a kind of fate or entity that helped me solve things. One day, I don't know how or why, I got under the table and began to inspect it from the bottom. And indeed, there was the solution. Between the side boards of the cabinets and the back board

There was a small hole at the back of the table. I don't know what that was for, but it left open access to the cabinets. I put my hand in, and then my forearm up to the elbow and began to feel. It touched something cold and I took it out. It was a .9 long pistol, I was scared, but I put my hand in again, and this time I took out a small, precious, nickel-plated revolver. I continued in my attempt, and my hand stumbled upon something very soft, to the touch it seemed to me like a magazine. I gently rolled it up and pulled it out of its place. Without getting up from my hiding place, I opened it. It was a book about the life and works of Julio Romero de Torres, by Emiliano M. Aguilera, with a prologue by Federico García Sanchís. I had already started my drawing classes with D. José Mataix and that interested me. But what I did not imagine is that a few pages later some paintings would appear with some beautiful, naked women, with pubic hair. There they were: "Gypsy Muse", "the Venus of poetry", "Rivalidad", "Cante hondo", "la trini's granddaughter", "a naked woman and a guitar". I had discovered the bodies of women that I would never have imagined, with such splendor and sensuality that they shocked me.

Afraid of being surprised, I put everything away carefully, hoping to be able to repeat that another day. I let the summer pass and we moved to the flat on Calle S. Nicolás. My father used to go down to the factory every afternoon and stay for a couple of hours. It was a matter of going down, when my father had gotten on, -and I mean going down, because the factory is located in a hollow, bordering the Molinar river- That way, he would have all the time in the world.

And I took out the book of the Cordovan painter several times. Those women attracted me in a voluptuous way, until it led, as it had to be, in my first masturbation. I was very young, so young, that I still had no semen. After the scare that caused me, since no one had told me what it was to masturbate, I promised myself a thousand times, never to look at those naked women again. But the promise was short-lived, a thousand times I delighted in those incarnations, aided by erotic fantasies.

But one day I started reading the text. *Córdoba!... The name of the sultan city is closely linked, closely linked to that of the ill-fated Julio Romero de Torres...* Then he described the city, the courtyard of the museum, the Plaza del Cristo de los Faroles. About how the painting, "Gypsy Muse", was awarded the first medal at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts, in 1908, and that the woman who served as the model was called Antonia "la Pelá".

Little by little, the painting and the paintings of the Cordovan painter were getting inside me. He took his females as the archetype of women, his compositions as pictorial themes, and his way of painting as his pictorial style. It was quite an obsession!

Around the forties, "la copla" became fashionable again, and naturally on Radio Alcoy it was the soul and life of its broadcasts. Estrellita Castro sang a copla dedicated to Romero de Torres:

*Of that famous woman that  
Julio Romero painted, with  
red carnations that envy  
the whole world...*

Concha Piquer, also had her lyrics dedicated to a painting by Romero de Towers:

*Oh, little Piconera, my  
little Piconera! That little  
face of pity, the  
feeling takes away from me.*

And the cantaora Pastora Soler, sang with a torn voice

*Julio Romero de Torres,  
painted the dark-haired  
woman, with mysterious  
eyes and a soul full of sorrow*

Everything helped my obsession to grow. One day I went to the "Papelería Amado", which was in the lower part of S. Miguel street, to buy some pencils to draw, -the so-called compound pencils- and there on the counter there was a collection of twenty stickers, on pictures by Romero de Torres. The stickers, which I still have, were printed in a single color in sepia tones, and on the back they explain how the painter had conceived the theme about anonymous Andalusian women and their possible anecdotes. There they are: "Tanagra", "Dora la cordobesita", "Amarantina", "la Buenaventura", "la niña del brasero"... until completing the collection where no nude was included.

After a while, in the "Lloréns" bookstore, I bought "Julio Romero de Torres or the secret of Córdoba", a book by Marcelo Abril, from the publishing house "Iberia-Joaquín editor, Barcelona". And then, "Julio Romero de Torres, his life, his work and his museum", by Cecilio Barberán. That happened to swell my collection of books on the painter.

But a new motif would divert this veneration for the painter's work to another stage. On page 43 of the work by Emiliano Aguilera there is a reproduction of a work by Romero de Torres on "Salomé" and a text that says. *Julio was attracted several times by the disturbing figure of the daughter of Herodias. And how not to be interested? Of all the women of which the Holy Scriptures speak, this is one of the most suggestive. It is a symbol of lust and debauchery. She is accompanied by a legend of vice. And it is, above all, among biblical women, the one who represents the triumph of Art and Beauty. With her dance, dancing naked before her stepfather, Salome gets the head of the Baptist...*

I saw in that character, in that painting that exuded sensualism, an invitation to sin. Next to his brown and possibly perfumed flesh, the sparkle in his eyes was disturbing. She was dressed and naked. Show and hide. The temptation was formidable.

So I dedicated myself to finding out who the enigmatic woman was, and in Saturnino Calleja's dictionary, I found the fundamental data of Salomé, which I expanded on in the Bible, in Lc. 9, 7 – 11 and Matt. 14, 1-12; Although neither of them mentions the name of Salome, Matthew says: *It is known that Herod had arrested John, chained him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Philip, his brother; Well, Juan told him. It is not lawful for you to have it. He wanted to kill him, but he was afraid of the crowd that had him as a prophet.*

*When Herod's birthday arrived, the daughter of Herodias danced before everyone, and Herod liked it so much, that he swore to give her whatever she asked for, and she, induced by her mother: Give me, he said, here on the tray . . , the head of John the Baptist. The king was saddened and ordered to give it to him and ordered the throat of the*

*John the Baptist, whose head was brought on a platter and given to the young woman, who took it to her mother.*

The Bible does not mention that Salome fell lustfully in love with John, nor does it say that she used the seven veils in her dance. But her figure had turned me on and I started looking for everything related to her.

I found reproductions of paintings. Titian painted his daughter Lavinia as Salome. The French painter Gustave Moureau made a series of paintings about the daughter of Herodias. But for me the definitive one, the one who personified the mysterious image of Salome was the French painter Alejandro Regnault, in a painting that is in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, which represents Salome seated in an obscene way, with a huge silver tray on her legs, her black hair loose and tangled, her dark gaze and a cutlass that she holds in her left hand, resting her bare feet on a leopard skin that completes the composition.

That "fate" or entity continued its work of help. One day I was drawing in my house, I had the radio connected, -there was then a broadcast on Radio Alcoy, which was a kind of "Listener's Mailbox", in which some tickets were distributed with which you could request the music that most appealed to you. liked-. And at that moment, they said: Requested by..., they are going to listen to the "Dance of the Seven Veils", from the opera Salome, by Richard Strauss, performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. I thought it was an extraordinary piece of music, where sensuality, frenzy and rhythm are mixed. I loved it and it awoke in me the desire to know what that complete opera would be like. At that time I had already become fond of music and I wanted to buy a gramophone but my financial resources were scarce and I had to settle for listening to classical music broadcast by a station. One day I found out that in a store, "Discos Mira", a used gramophone was being sold. I went to the establishment and indeed there was the device. They asked me for 300 pts. and as my savings reached them I was able to acquire it. The owner, who saw my enthusiasm, wanted to give me a gift, but he didn't know if I was going to like the type of music he planned to give me. They were two 78 rpm records, and it was "The Dance of the Seven Veils" from the opera Salomé by Richard Strauss, in a version by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leopoldo Stokowski. I was stunned, I felt like an electric shock of emotion. The discs were "La voz de su amo", white label. The dance occupied both sides of one record and the first of the second, which was completed with Eicheim's "Japanese Nocturne".

Years later, while I was already studying in Valencia, I found Oscar Wilder's work, "Salomé", on which Richard Strauss had based himself to compose his music in a bookstore. When the first

microgrooves came out, I bought the complete opera, which took up two discs 33 rpm, by Decca, in a version by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, with Klemens Klaus as conductor.

It was many years later, already living in Madrid, when I was able to see the opera Salomé live. It was in March 1986, at the La Zarzuela theater, where Pepa and I with a friend, Fernando Tato, a professor of French, attended the performance of the play. He was going to see the dream he had harbored for so many years come true.

The performance was extraordinary. The opera does not have an overture and the music enters directly into the action, in which Narraboth, a page and some soldiers, located on a terrace of Herod's palace, sing and discuss Yochanaan the Prophet, Salome the daughter of Herodias and the stranger What does the moon look like?

The soprano, Hildergard Behrens was Salome; Horst Hietstemann, Herod and the Baptist, Babro Ericson in the main roles. With the National Orchestra conducted by Antoni Ros Marbá.

Later, in the Autumn Festivals of 1995, they returned to replace, and we to see, the work in the same theater. This time with the Madrid Symphony Orchestra with Vadim Münster as conductor.

We also attended the staging according to Oscar Wilder by the Lindsay Kemp company. In which, Lindsay himself played Salome, representing the dance of the seven veils, dancing with a large python snake, coiled around his body. Mairata O'Wisiedo played the role of Herod and the Greater Orlando, a blind actor, played Herodias. In short, in my music library I have several versions

of the opera "Salomé", and in the library several books about the character.

But let's leave Salomé, and return to the year 1946 to my painting classes with D. José Mataix. I was already wearing long pants and a jacket with a tie. I remember that on Thursdays and Sundays, my friend Juan Pérez Juan and I would go dancing at the "Marquesina Rafelet". It was the time of the "boogui-boogui", the live orchestra and the vocalists: Waldo and Amanda Gisbert. Everything was danced, pasodobles, "*luna, luna de Spain rattlesnake...*", sambas, "*Santa Marta, Santa Marta has a train, but no tram...*"; tropical melodies, "*Ponciana, your branches speak to me of love...*", hot rhythms from Central America, "*if a girl stops you and hugs you, she is from Pénjamo, and if she looks at you and sometimes sighs, she is also from there...*"; the melody of the movie "The last of the Philippines", "*I will tell you, why my song calls you without ceasing, my beating blood, my life asking, that you never stray further ..*"

The place was packed, the girls who attended the dance, young workers and domestic servants, sat in groups at tables around the central dance floor. When we entered, we would leave our coat, scarf and hat in the wardrobe, we would scan the horizon, we would choose the girl and when the music came on we would ask her for a dance. I admired how they knew how to dance all the rhythms. But when slow music came on, like "Moonlight Serenade," the dance floor would get crowded. They bumped into each other's backs and some girls let themselves be squeezed, until the "young man if he doesn't take the key out of his pocket, I can't dance well" came, when the pasodoble "Islas Canarias" sounded, it was the closing. The presenter approached the microphone, and said. "Respectable public, the company thanks you for your assistance, and we announce that the next day there will be new and varied performances. Thank you so much".

I would go home smelling of different colognes and perfumes: "Tabú", "Galán de night", "Maderas de Oriente", "Bolero"...

Throughout high school, Pepa and I had established an affinity. We went out in a gang and I tried to get by her side, and at St. George's parties, my best gift was for her. Well, the maid that they had at Pepa's house told her one fine day: "Miss, on Sunday I spent the whole afternoon dancing with that boy you like, named Ramón." Pepa spent a long time without wanting to talk to me.

D. José Mataix lived at Calle Oliver, nº 10. I used to go there for the prints. His study, not very large, was very well equipped. Two Renaissance cabinets, a sculpture by Peresejo, "The slave"; tanagers, Chinese figurines, bronze ashtrays, and on the walls, a cuckoo clock, and several paintings painted by him: "Rafaelillo", landscapes, of the "barranc del zinc", of farmhouses and little windfalls; several



interiors and a view of the rear garden of the house. He always received me, very friendly and nice, Chelo, his wife. I felt a lot of respect and I was very happy to be in my teacher's studio and I thought – when will I start painting in oils?

My father was changing about my drawing classes and about me, and I also wanted to change my feelings about him. Before the war, when I was very young, I did not understand what was happening in my house, I did not understand why, most nights, in my house there were arguments, disturbances, some plate flying through the air. I did not know the reason for that discomfort and that for no reason. It took me time and suffering to assimilate my father's two personalities; one, when he arrived at night, another, when he got up, always quite late, had breakfast and went out to the banks, like an affable, nice person, with a good appearance, a gift for people, the gentleman who gave up his right hand and took off his hat before the ladies, leaving a trace of charm by his presence. After eating, to the Círculo Industrial to play dominoes.

But the nights came and he used to hang out in a hunting club, with people from different social categories. That tavern was very central, but hidden in a kind of back room that looked more like a semi-basement. Some nights, when my father was late, my mother, I don't know why, would send me, let's say, to pick up my father. I remember that I entered there trembling, the cigarette smoke filled the atmosphere, and created a kind of haze, the lights were dim and the guests sat around the tables. One of the nights I heard my father singing, with a rather refined voice, a fragment of "Dolorosa": *The cold rock of Calvary hidden in black clouds, by a lonely path the Virgin Mother goes up, and cries...* My father standing tall, blond, with blue eyes, which at that moment were not staring, a lock of hair had come loose and was falling over his forehead, singing and acting like Marcos Redondo. When he saw me, he said to me, "wait, we'll be leaving soon", but when he finished singing, the verses and the dedication came: *To my first wife, Enriqueta, may she be in glory: The sad live and the happy die ! .. / When I wanted to die, God didn't want it/ today, when I want to live, God doesn't want it!*

That wait was endless and when my father decided to leave, I found myself totally devastated, alone, helpless and in an environment that rejected me, and I was invaded by restlessness and the desire to escape to the end of the world.

We would get home, and naturally the atmosphere would change, my mother would scold him and my father would lash out at everything like a hurricane; meanwhile, some slap sounded, towards my mother or towards me, who got in the way. It was truly unbearable. He staggered into bed and the next day everything was normal, affability returned, my mother and I hid it and calm returned, and so on every day.

But one day the marriage broke up. My father moved out of the house to the flat he had in the factory. He was carrying a suitcase with clothes, an image of the Heart of Jesus and a photograph of a life-size bust, in black and white, of his first wife, Enriqueta Gisbert Domínguez, who had presided over the ranch since the first day of their current marriage. from a bedroom wall. There was the imprint of its oval, and in the house there was a peace, a tranquility and a silence that I could not imagine. I went to bed and could sleep, no shouting or violence would wake me up.

My mother looked for a lawyer, who advised her not to go back to live with my father, if she wanted to have peace of mind, and an economic solution would be found; If not, cheer up and promise yourself resignation for the rest of your life. My mother opted for the latter, there was an agreement between my parents. The past past. And that's how the Heart of Jesus returned to my house, the suitcase with the dirty clothes and the photograph of Enriqueta Gisbert Domínguez, to preside over the bedroom again. My father belonged to the Old Guard

of the Falange since 1933, as stated in his card with the number 18449, and during the war, as I have already said, he was imprisoned for almost two years for his political significance.

It would have been perfect if that prolonged and forced abstinence would have made him forget the problem he had been carrying since the death of his first wife. But it was not like that, once the contest was over, he found some medals that had to be celebrated: One, from the Luceros, with a red and gold ribbon and the blades of the Requeté in black. Another pin, from the 1936 Uprising, with the National Flag. Another, commemorative of the Falange, with a red and black ribbon and the most important, that of an ex-captive, which reads, "Suffering for the Homeland", around a castle, with a navy blue ribbon, of the latter there were small versions, for lapel or buttonhole.

His career was increased and he held various political positions in the Regime, naturally, without a payroll, my father had too much pride and a noble concept of honor and the Homeland. And so he continued on his way, by day an irreproachable conduct, and at night, shipwrecking in his great problem. But all this had to affect the domestic economy. Although the appearance before the people was opulent and prosperous, even wasteful, my father was generous and splendid with friends, how many hardships have I had to go through, without being able to even ask for a scholarship for studies, how did the son of Manuel Castañer Did I have to apply for a scholarship? That, my father never consented.

When, after the war, people were asked to deposit any jewelry or gold they might have in the bank, because the Homeland needed it, my father gave it all, rings, chains, medals, and family jewelry, much or little, but he said that he would not give me up because it was not made of gold.

My father belonged as a protective member to the Red Cross, Catholic Action, Reconstruction of Temples, to the Children of S. Juan de Dios, from Valencia; subscribed to the newspaper "El Pensamiento Navarro", to the weekly "Signal"; he collaborated with donations in various charitable associations and religious institutions.

I remember that one day two nuns from a convent in Valencia came to my house to collect their annual donation. My mother received them and went into the dining room, chatting them up: —Oh,

sisters! what a life of yours, so sacrificed, sure that when you die you will go to heaven—.

"My daughter, there we will see what St. Peter says."

One year it happened that when they came, my father was in the toilet, which was only separated from the dining room, where they were sitting, by a fairly simple door. Suddenly, a cascade of round, ragged farts sounded. My mother wanted to die and the nuns too, she didn't know what to say and to soften the situation she said: Oh, Mr. Manolo is very constipated! The nuns laughed and my mother too.

My father calmly left, went into the kitchen, washed his hands, went out to the dining room, he greeted them and gave them his mite.

When they had left, my mother rebuked him for the violence of the situation.

What the fuck! Let's see if I can't fart as much as I want, being in the toilet of my house.

Three years had passed since D. Pepe Mataix came to my house, and he continued, with admirable tenacity, coming daily to give me classes, and one day he told me: "It is time for us to start painting in oils."

He ordered me two small stretchers and taught me how to mount the canvas: "You have to put a nail in the center of each side and stretch the canvas, make a hem at the corners and finish it off with a nail." The canvases were taut, like a drum head, and if they weren't taut enough, wedges would go into it.

I bought a set of white bristle brushes, "After painting each day, clean the brushes and wrap them in cigarette paper, so they will be tight and not like brooms."

Several colored tubes, a palette, some oil cans, white spirit, walnut oil, charcoal, and above all, an easel!

I was not happy. The bad thing was that in my house there was no space to be able to paint, I didn't have a room for it, so every day I had to set up the "stall" in the dining room and take it down at night. But there was a lot of enthusiasm, and a lot of desire, and I began to paint all kinds of prints: heads and studies of the painter Sorolla, Dutch landscapes with boats and a sunset; flowers reflected in a glass table; heads of friars. The paints flowed from my hands, and the teacher's jaws dropped to see how I solved the problems.

In 1943 I had presented some drawings to the "III Exposición del F. de JJ de Alcoy", and they awarded me a prize.

**“To the student Ramón**

**Castañer This is the award that the F. de JJ. It has granted you, for your works presented in the III Exhibition. Do not forget that you must form in Franco's Youth Phalanges"**

**Jose Sanz Llopis** (signature and seal)

It never occurred to me to be part of that organization, perhaps because I saw my father's political "forophism".

In 1946, in Alicante, they awarded me an award:

**The Provincial  
Head**

**of the Union Work "Education and Rest"  
From  
Alicante greets**

**D. Ramón Castañer Segura**

**with a high arm and has the honor to inform him of the  
distribution of prizes for the III**

**Provincial Art Exhibition, Saturday, at 10:15 p.m., during the celebration of a  
artistic festival in this Headquarters, to which you are especially invited.**

**Salvador Escarré Batet**

**gladly takes advantage of this opportunity to offer you the testimony of his most distinguished consideration.**

**Alicante, on November 14, 1946**

Perhaps some would say, that it was noticeable, that my father held political positions within the party, and as a consequence of this, were these awards; but knowing my father, I knew that this was impossible.

At that time I met Enrique Cervera, Jaime Peret and Antonio Campesino; fans of music, literature and good food, I got in contact with them very well, and we made a great friendship.

Enrique Cervera was from Castellón de la Plana, as was Antonio Campesino, the son of a notary stationed in Alcoy.

At that time, we listened to music with the wind-up gramophone that "Mira" had bought at home, and he had new 78 r records. pm: "La Siesta del Fauno", by Debussy; "The Song of the Nightingale", by Strawinsky; the "Sad Waltz", by Sibelius; etc...

At the end of May 1947, Enrique Cervera encouraged us to go to Valencia to see the "Feria Muestrario" and attend a concert by the Municipal Orchestra of Valencia, at the Teatro Principal. We got the tickets on the Alcoy-Valencia bus and looked for accommodation at the Hotel Avenida. We saw the Fair, and on Sunday at 11:30, we were on the first floor of the "Principal".

I had never attended a live symphony concert. Yes, I had been, many times, to the concerts that the "Banda Primitiva", from Alcoy, gave at the Teatro Calderón, but finding myself in Valencia, with friends, independent and in a big theater, motivated me positively.

The program was made up, in the first part, of: "La Gacela de Almotamid", "La Siesta del Fauno" by Debussy; and "Bermeja Tower". And the second part dedicated exclusively to "The 6th Symphony, in B Minor. Opus, 74", (Pathétique), by Tchaikovsky.

Enrique explained to us, to put us in a situation, some passages of the pieces that the orchestra was going to interpret, he illustrated us about the authors and the works. He was a truly knowledgeable guy.

When the lights went out and the music began to play, I felt that I was piercing the sense of reality and my spirit was wandering in an unreal and imagined world. I saw colors, heroic deeds, beautiful maidens, crying on their windowsills, saying goodbye to their knights.

In the "Patética", when the bows strummed the violins in a high-pitched cry, the skin that protected my body seemed to me hit by tiny foam pellets.

The ovations and applause from the public brought me out of that fantastic torpor. And then I thought that music was an art capable of engendering in people the highest and most noble feelings.

I haven't seen Enrique Cervera for many years, but I recognize how beneficial his friendship was for me, to get to know and become a lifelong fan of the world of music, which I have joined to that of painting.

On the agreed day, we were all summoned to the State Exam at the gates of Alma Mater Valentina, -Faculty of Philosophy and Letters-. they were calling

by the registration numbers and they distributed us in individual tables, placed in the central courtyard and in the upper galleries.

They gave us a text in Latin, by Cicero, and we had to analyze it grammatically, put it in order, and translate it into Spanish. They let you use a dictionary, and I was lucky that in mine I found the text, ordered and translated, in which the composition of a Roman legion on a battlefield was described: "In front of the soldiers with the shields, at the flanks the cavalry and the archers who carried the arrows, and closing the formation, the lancers,..."

At four in the afternoon, we had the call for the mathematics exam, they made a new distribution and they distributed the sheets with the problems to us. I had no idea how to solve them, and I tried to copy, but no luck. I presented the sheets almost blank.

The next day, the writing exercise. I defended myself as best I could, but badly. When we finished the exam, the boys of the course went to eat at "La Pepica", a typical restaurant on the Malvarrosa beach, we took a bath and rented a boat. We felt free, trying to overcome the tension of the previous days. Of all of us in the 7th grade, including the girls, only four passed.

I soon forgot the matter and dedicated myself to thinking about the summer.

The long, hot summer passed like all of them. We spent the summer in the *borrera*, but I, since I wasn't such a child anymore, was sovereignly bored. He read, listened to music, and above all, he painted. I painted a life-size portrait of my mother on a large canvas. She was dressed in a dark blue long dress. I was very daring. I drew his figure in charcoal, centered the figure, and without staining, I dedicated myself to filling and solving all the problems, which were not few. I was very excited and that made me make up for my lack of experience with it. In the background, I put a balustrade, which I invented, and an idealized landscape, not very lucky. But since the physical resemblance was quite good, I had no objection to finishing the work and signing it.



*painting my mother's portrait*

I did not settle for that portrait and I started another of my father, with the same measurements. My father was sitting in an armchair, from the Casa de la Bolla, which he borrowed. Gray suit, with black tie and I ran into the same problems. The drawing solved it well, but the impasto was what resisted me. In the background, I also invented some curtains.

I was very young and lacked experience. At that time, I could not invent a reality that I did not know.

I couldn't invent curtains because I had never seen them. I had no notion of the chiaroscuro produced by its folds, nor of its own and projected shadows.

First, know the shape; later, study it, compose it and finally interpret it. I think this concept is applicable to formal or informal painting. Well, if in the form the drawing, the proportion, the composition is important, in the informal or abstract, it is equally important, the concordance of masses and spaces, balances and tones.

The resemblance of the portraits was quite good, but they were clumsily resolved. However, since my parents liked them, they were framed and hung at home.

When my father died I unnailed them, rolled up the cloth and put them away. But one fine day, I don't know how, or when, or by whom, the paintings disappeared, until never.

In the month of September, I returned to the State Exam and the result was the same as in June. Without trauma, I took the train and went back to Alcoy.

In those, my young days, to see friends or girls, they

I was walking through the square or the street S. Lorenzo.

Going out for a walk consisted of walking up and down, from the Ideal bar, to the Church, and back again. Or, walk the sidewalks of S. Lorenzo, from the Trianon to the corner of S. Francisco street, go to the Baviera bar and continue towards the square.

Pepa would go out with her close friend, Concha Raduán, I would go up to them, try to make them talk and at half past nine, I would accompany Pepa to her home.

Pepa had become a woman, beautiful loose hair, a little makeup, a radiant blouse and a red cardigan on top, a tight skirt, and high-heeled shoes. My heart always raced when I stood next to him and when we said goodbye I went home and felt the same sensation that I experienced at the concert in Valencia. I saw colors, heroic deeds, and love stories like those of Pelleas and Melisende.

He didn't go out for a walk every day, generally on Thursdays and Saturdays, little changed in that. But the schedule was different, it started at eight, until a quarter to ten "If customs are laws and we respect the laws." There were no impositions, no paternal authoritarianism, simply customs, before ten o'clock the streets were deserted, and of course, after dinner, one no longer left the house.

Only on very special days, and the girls, if they went with their parents or the parents of a friend.

Around this time I met the painter from Albaida, José Segrelles. When I showed him my work, in his studio, he told me that he was going to put me to the test. That I go to Madrid for a few months, to copy in the Prado Museum, that I see the great masters and after making a few copies, the ones I chose, he would tell me, on my return, what I had to do.

My father, with whom I had gone to Albaida, reacted very well, he took it very seriously, and he told me that we would already look for a date for next year.

I continued painting at home, either from life or by making copies. I continued dating Pepa and on November 24, 1947, I asked her for a relationship. Since then, our lives have come together, forever.

My father prepared the trip to Madrid for the month of January 1948. Through the mediation of Alfonso Saura, who was already in Madrid, I found a room in the "Pension Geli", Pso. del Prado, nº 12–5th floor. There were many people from Alcoy and Valencia.

Before starting the copies, I went to the Prado, it took me two days to look, study and become aware of what I wanted to copy, by color, composition and theme.

To enter to copy, they asked for a guarantee of a first medal, but Alfonso, who was a friend of Eugenio Hermoso, managed to get me to sign the guarantee, and with a prior registration and a fee, they told me at the museum office. "Come on Tuesday at 10 in the morning and you will have the site ready. What painting do you want to copy? The god Mars, by Velázquez, –I said– (the painting is numbered in the Prado with the number 1208, and it was painted between 1640 and 1642). I went home to Macarrón and ordered a frame with canvas, 70 x 125 cm, proportional to the original, which was 179 x 95 cm, since it could not be reproduced at the same size.

I bought a photograph of the work at the sales and reproduction office, and I gridded it, as D. José Mataix had taught me, and I divided the canvas into grids of the same proportion. The drawing came out perfect.

As it had been arranged, the following Tuesday at ten o'clock in the morning, I went to the Museum, I already had the place reserved, and on the floor a linoleum of one square meter, a small scissor-type chair and an easel in front of the painting that Velázquez he had painted for the Torre Parada, the hunting lodge of Felipe IV. –The brush strokes in the painting were short and fast. Velázquez, perhaps unintentionally, was the first impressionist painter.

I began to paint, paste, copy colors, glazes, shadows, strokes, brushstrokes, the painting, little by little, grew. Tourists and visitors, especially Japanese, gathered around my painting, and sometimes there were so many "voyeurs" that a guard in the room approached begging them to move on, this stimulated me and gave me confidence in my work.

On Sundays there was no copy, I got a ticket for the National Symphony Orchestra, which performed at the Monumental Theater at 11:30 in the morning. I remember an extraordinary program, which was made up of Mancinelli's Cleopatra Overture; The Sylphs, by Chopin; and La Valse, by Ravel, in the first part, and The Symphony in D, by Cesar Frank, in the second. The program notes from that Sunday served months later to explain the Cleopatra Overture, performed by the Banda Primitiva de Alcoy.

After finishing the work of the God Mars, I prepared another canvas to copy the Venus of the "Bacchanal", by Titian. This work participates in the characteristics of Titian's works, monumentality, quality in materials and harmony in color. (In the Museum this work is cataloged with the number 418, and its size is 1.75 x 1.93 m, and it was painted commissioned by the Duke of Ferrara in 1518.).

I was only interested in the figure of Venus, lying on the meadow, naked, with a bowl in her hand, pink face and sleeping, due to the effects of alcohol. I dispensed with bacchante and dancing figures. Well, I was only attracted to the study of that nude, so subtle, so pearly and so transparent.

The third work that I copied was La Fortuna, by PP Rubéns, which was another female nude, which represented the goddess standing, on top of the globe of the World, smiling, a little wrapped in pink flesh, holding a kind of cloak, which more like a sail in the wind. (Its measurements are 1.79 x 0.95 m, and cataloged with the number 1674)

During my stay in Madrid, which lasted five months, I was not only interested in painting, but also in learning about the artistic and monumental world. I visited Toledo, Segovia, Aranjuez, with the palace and gardens; the Escorial, the Little House of the Prince, the Royal Palace.

At the Zarzuela theater, I saw the opera "The Invisible City of Kitege", by Rimsky Korsakov, and "Boris Godunow" by Mussorgsky.

At the Albéniz, the musical "El Canastillo de Fresas". At the Avenida cinema, I attended the controversial premiere of the film "Gilda", by Charles Vidor, with the great scandal that preceded its premiere, due to the famous dance of "In Chicago", where the sensuality of Rita Hayworth emerged from one of his black gloves. Censorship intervened, cutting off half of Rita's dance, and the audience contributed with their imagination, adding a non-existent nude, which had Glenn Ford's mythical slap in response.

I spent Holy Week in Madrid, which in those years was a week of obligatory recollection. Cinemas, bars, and restaurants closed, the radio broadcast classical music, and people left their homes to watch the processions, especially the Cristo de Medinaceli and the Procession of Silence. The girls dressed in black, with a comb and mantilla, to visit the churches. When I thought my work

was more than accomplished, I prepared things for my return. I took the paintings to Macarrón, we framed them and they took care of sending them to me, through the agency "Mona y Brotóns", to Alcoy.

My parents already knew the works, because they had visited me in Madrid, but when they saw them framed they were surprised at the good result and immediately looked for a place on the walls to hang them. The parade of people began, but my mother didn't think it was right for those ladies to show their nudes, and without giving it another thought, or admitting any remonstrances from anyone, she planted some curtains on them. That my father's friends were coming, blinds out, that the nuns were coming, blinds closed. Thus, with this running and slipping, they spent many years.



## CHAPTER III

*How many roads must a man walk  
before you count him as a man?*

*Bob Dylan*



When the painter Segrelles saw the works, they made a pleasant impression on him, and he told me: "Now you can go to S. Carlos". And with him, at the end of August, I went to Valencia. He introduced me to the secretary, Mr. Albert, and registered me for the entrance examination, which took place in early September.

For having completed seven high school courses, they exempted me from the general culture exam, and I only took the drawing exam, which consisted of two parts: first, drawing a bust of Hermes, by Praxiteles, on "Ingres" paper, which lasted about ten days. The second exercise was to fit the Venus de Milo, in charcoal, on large continuous paper. I made the drawings, quite well, and they approved my entry. I was already a student of Fine Arts.

After a few days I enrolled for the Colorido Preparatory course, which was equivalent to a first course, and I went to Alcoy. The only thing left to solve was the problem of my lodging in Valencia. By chance some friends of my father's factory manager, Federico Llácer and Luisa Pla, who lived in the capital, met my father, and he suggested my lodging. Later we met and we came to the conclusion that I could go live at his house. My father and they reached an economic agreement, and on October 4, 1948, I arrived at his home, at Calle Micer Mascó, 42. I remember the date, because that day was the birthday of his son, Francisco Llácer Pla, then, Young musical promise, a wonderful uncle, with an extraordinary character, who had a relationship with Carmen Peris. They were married in April 1949, and I stayed home alone, as if I were the youngest son. The whole family accepted me very well, his brother Arturo, a violinist in an orchestra; his brother Federico and his sister Luisa. In that family I found a haven of peace. The lady was an extraordinary cook and in the home there was a well-being that I was not used to.

In the first year (1948–49) we were 79 students, including boys and girls. The subjects were made up of: **Colorido Preparatory**, Professor Genaro Lahuerta, two-hour daily class. A model was placed, a still life, a still life, and the first day, they entered the class in alphabetical order, and they chose a place, point of view and easel, (we entered together, painters and sculptors.)

**Drawing of the Ancient and Clothing**, professor, Sanchis-Yago, plasters of classical Greek figures were drawn with charcoal and stumps: Doryphoros, Venus of the Shell, Venus leaving the bath, Diana the Huntress, Apoxyomenon..., two hours of class a day, and entry in alphabetical order.

**Modeling**, teacher, Mr. Bolinches, clay figures, two hours a day, and We also entered together, painters and sculptors.

**Liturgy**, Professor, Rvd. Alfonso Roig, ornaments, symbols and colors of the Church.

In the course I soon made friends: Ignacio Bayarri, Joaquín Michavila, José M<sup>a</sup>. Obón, José Soler (Monjalés), Julia Mir, Fina Fontané, Conchín Capilla, José Gonzalbo.

There was a "nuveau vague" atmosphere there. It broke with classicism, which we considered "démodé", but the intellectual atmosphere was

regular. It was barely read, and very few were interested in music. In some exhibitions an attempt was made to strike the discordant note, a kind of "pan"; This was the case in the Soria-Aedo exhibition, and with that of Manuel Benedito. "Long live Picasso! Death to Velázquez!"

The course passed quickly, unlike those of the baccalaureate. My final grades were splendid. Outstanding in all subjects and Honors in Genaro Lahuerta's class.

The friendship with Segrelles continued. From time to time, he would take a trip to Show him my works, we would chat and he would show me what he was painting.

At that time, D. José Mataix Monllor died in Alcoy, that appreciated professor who introduced me to the world of drawing and painting in the old fashioned way. I will never forget his teachings, his advice and his friendship. If in the world of painting from Alcoy, he did not reach an outstanding position, in the world of pedagogy, he had no equal. He knew how to explain how and when a painting had to be made. What were we going to use to preserve the materials, palettes, brushes, canvases...  
What drugstore should we use to help oil: walnut oil, linseed oil, varnishes...

How many times have I remembered his teachings, which remained within me, like a quality residue.

In S. Carlos, nobody told you how you had to draw, or what colors you had to mix, to obtain this or that shade. The daily work, the contact with the classmates, the rhythm of the march made you progress, stimulated you, more than the scant advice from the teachers. For this reason, after a vacation, in which the rhythm had been lost, the lack of training was noticeable, the limping and hesitating in the drawing. The mind saw it, but the hands did not obey you. Little by little, you were greasing yourself and again, you took the march.

The following academic year, (1949–50) the first, which was actually the second, the subjects were.

**Drawing from Nature.** –with a male or female human figure. The teacher was Adolfo Ferrer Amblar.

**Colorful and Composition.** –by José Américo Salazar, –He had a terrible bad temper, he yelled a lot, he corrected loudly, but he did it well, better than with his painting. He taught, rather than painted.

**Artistic Anatomy.** –with José M<sup>a</sup> Bayarri, sculptor, peculiar character, editor of the art magazine "RIBALTA".

**History of art.** – José Gimeno was in charge of the chair, and the "Summa Artis" served as a basis for us, which we followed carefully, due to the pleasant explanations of the professor.

Many Fridays I would take the train at seven in the evening and stay in Alcoy, so on Saturday and Sunday, I could go out with Pepa. On Monday, on the six in the morning train, he returned to Valencia to continue his work.

Paco Llácer integrated me into his group of musician friends, who formed very pleasant gatherings. At that time, Malher's Symphony No. 2, the "Resurrection", premiered in Valencia at the Teatro Principal, Arturo, Paco's brother, performed as a violinist, and he got us the tickets. The concert promised to be spectacular. The theater stage was enlarged to two rows of seats.

In addition to the Municipal Orchestra, a trumpet band, a choir and a children's choir would take part on stage and another, not visible, inside. Hired musicians and lots of percussion. The premiere was impressive.

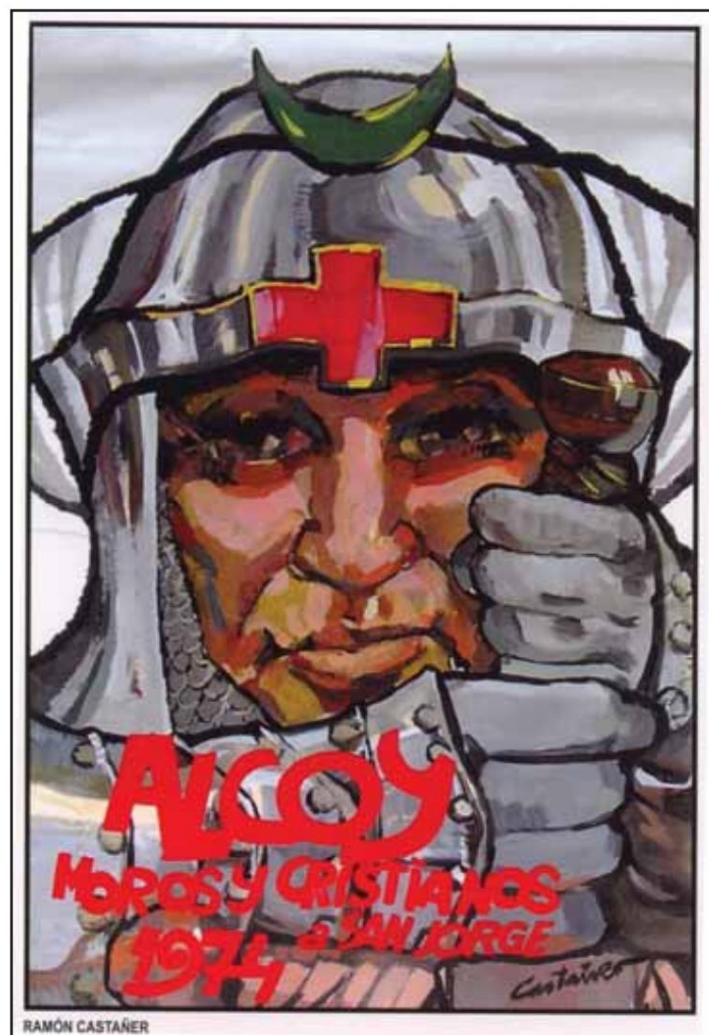
Around that time, towards the end of 1949, D. Francisco Romá, from Papeleras Reunidas in Alcoy, called me to ask if I could illustrate some articles from the 1950 Festival Program. They gave me several articles so that I could interpret the literary texts with drawings. I used the walnut procedure, an element used in carpentry with a pleasant reddish tint.

I illustrated with a border, which represented the shield of Alcoy, a herald and a trumpet as support the salute of the mayor D. Enrique Albors Vicens.

"The festivities of S. Jorge in the 15th century", by José Moya Moya, chronicler of the City. "Tradition and Folklore", by Vicente Miró. "The Mona de Pascua in Alcoy", by A. Valor. "Spring and children", by Adrián Miró. "Protection of Minors in Alcoy", by A. Giner Cloquell. "Eternal Routes", by José García Llopis.

The cover of that year was a watercolor of S. Jorge by the painter Segrelles.

In 1951 I also participated in the illustrations, and of all of them, an article by my girlfriend, Pepita Botella. The article was titled "Even if a shower falls!", a premonitory article, because that year it poured in the entrances.



Party Poster – 1974.

This was the beginning of my long collaboration with the Association of S. Jorge as an illustrator. Four covers in the programs of **1953, 1957, 1988 and 1996**, and an infinity of illustrations and vignettes in aquatint, watercolor, gouache, oil,

acrylic... In **1974** the Municipal Fiestas Commission commissioned me the poster for the Moors and Christians Fiestas, and on April 9 it appeared in the **Ciudad** newspaper and in the "Cançons" section signed by Serafín, (Joan's pseudonym Valls), a coplilla titled "**El cartell d'enguany**".

Like a clarí cridaner from  
the Festa Sant Jordian, like  
the Alcoian soul the Castanyer  
cartel.

There l'esperit fester  
traditional expression tea.  
Heraldic, springtime  
and full of symbology,  
exalts the trilogy  
on an international scale.

Eixe cap of palladi

SERAFI

Lluit Creu i Mitja Lluna, I  
had the timely grace of the  
Festival that is here.  
It has pleased  
everyone I saw Per ben  
fet i ben pintat and  
proclaims the city that to  
interpret the Festa when the most  
that paints is llesta ix a cartell de trellat.

Around those dates in 1950, I made the work "The Bullfighter's Widow", a painting of great ambition, 1.80 x 1.90 m. The scene represents a woman in mourning, veiled, sitting in a third-class carriage, with a bundle by her side, on the seat, and leaning on her, a little girl holding a photograph of a bullfighter in her hands.

A very literary painting. I prepared some sketches, looked for some models, and without further ado, I started the work. It had an echo in Alcoy, and in "Información" in Alicante, on June 21, an article by Ases, a journalist and art critic, appeared on the successes of my work.

In October 1950, I started the 2nd year in Fine Arts, the subjects were: **Drawing from life.** –Professor, Gabriel Esteve, with models and charcoal pencil.

**Colorful and Composition.** –The subject was attended by several professors.

**Perspective.** –Front and oblique, professor, Enrique Ginesta. He explained to us the theory of light and shadows. He taught us to use the shading by the smeared ink drop. It was fantastic.

**Pictorial procedures.** -Mr. Monpó. Fresco techniques, oil on tempera, watercolor...

The 3rd year (1951–52) consisted of the following subjects: **Color and Composition of 3rd.** –This chair was taught by Mr. Tuset, but his death passed to Genaro Lahuerta.

**Drawing in motion.** -Mr. Beltrán, a good-sized sculptor.

**Landscape.** –professor, Manuel Gimeno. We paint through the streets of the city, gardens, Torres de Serrano, Aragón station...

**Perspective II.** –Expansion of the perspective of the previous course, taught by the same professor.

In 1951, at the X1 SEU University Art Exhibition, I was awarded the third medal for the work "Portrait", precisely a portrait of D<sup>a</sup>. Luisa Pla, the lady of the house where I was staying.

The painting was very daring. The lady was sitting. His look was disturbing, the pupils focused on the viewer. Silver hair, a little unkempt,

with a black lace mantilla that fell listlessly over her shoulders, and in her hands she intuitively held a fan.

The color of the work was centered on purplish greys, blacks, blues pastel and ocher. The background was very whitewashed to highlight the female figure.

The distribution of prizes took place in the Auditorium of the University a few days after the exhibition closed.

In May 1951, the "1st BIENNIAL ART EXHIBITION OF THE KINGDOM OF VALENCIA" was convened. I presented the work "Vae Victis", (Woe to the vanquished!) 1.70 x 2.00 m. The work was selected to appear in the "1st Hispano-American Art Biennial" installed at the Palacio de Exposiciones in Madrid.

The critics said of it: *"In room XXX1..., but in our opinion the most successful among all that is exhibited in this room is "Vae Victis" by Ramón Castañer. It is a canvas of heartrending pathos, in which emotion is achieved without great theatrical effects, and of the two figures that make up the painting, perhaps the one that moves us the most is that of the woman with her face sunk in the shadows. , because it is difficult to interpret these pains by taking the gesture to the canvas, and it seems more real if we guess it in the collapse of the body and in the same shadows that imprison the figures"*.

Before starting the teacher training course, for the month of June, we made the end of degree trip. Of the almost 80 students that we started, there were 14 of us who got on the small bus that would take us through different cities: Cuenca, Madrid, Segovia, Toledo, Valladolid, Bilbao, Zumaya, visiting museums, foundations, cathedrals. It was an instructive and very interesting trip.

And finally, the last year arrived (1952–53), the subjects were: **History of**

**Art.** –professor Mr. Garín **Pedagogy of**

**Drawing.** –Professor D<sup>a</sup> Rosario. We carried out the pedagogical practices in two centers: the Boix Academy, where we went three times a week to give classes to the first-school kids, and the Hispanic College, which was a high school center.

**Ornamental drawing.** –professor Mr. Jimeno. Projects, sketches, decorative ornaments, emblems, plant decoration...

**Solid geometry.** –Professor Mr. Bonet Minguet. Dihedral and Orthogonal Projections, and Axonometric and Caballera Perspective.

In short: I don't know how teaching is currently in the recent Fine Arts faculties, but at the time I did my studies, there were very few professors who knew how to teach. When I passed the entrance exam, I thought I was going to find a teacher with a teaching degree to guide you, qualified to lead a class, to explain how to compose a plastic representation, either in drawing or painting; how the mixtures of the materials had to be made, to obtain different shades of color. To very few teachers I could give, remembering those times, a good grade. I don't know how they got most of the teaching positions. Some were soft, they passed in front of the work that was on the easel and they told you: "It's stained, impasto a little more", but I didn't know what he meant, because my work had a finger of material.

Another, when faced with a charcoal drawing of a figure, commented: "His eyes are pregnant", and no, he did not understand the pregnancy of the eyes in a figure, almost life-size.

José Américo Salazar, a color teacher, painter of a rather mediocre work, was an excellent educator. He had an incredible temper, he would yell, curse, and yell at you what to do. In all your corrections

he was right, he knew very well what he indicated to correct the defects, but what amazed me is that he did not see in his painting the defects that he corrected in others, it was like the evangelical phrase, the straw in the eye unaffiliated.

José María Bayarri, professor of Artistic Anatomy, was a great teacher, friendly, entertaining, witty, he knew how to combine a joke with a muscle, or apply a bone with a stew. While leafing through an anatomical atlas, he hummed: "Dear little mother of the soul..." He winked and grimaced, it was quite a spectacle. I remember that one summer they were spending the summer in the town of Agres, he and his wife, his muse, as he called her, a woman who had given him a lot of children, a madrasa, voluminous, kind, who next to her husband, Mr. Bayarri, not very tall, nervous, who gesticulated while reciting some of his poems, and it seemed that he was going to direct the Universe, and he opened his arms, resembling a fleshless Christ that he sculpted, they made up a couple "Xaudaronian". I think, he said, "that one of these days, I'm going to fly off a mountain, and I think I'll make it," and his wife looked at him with a good-natured smile. One day, his son Ignacio, my classmate, told me that when his sleeping parents snored, his mother snored in C major, and his father in B flat, and they formed a musical ensemble.

In the Pictorial Procedures class, taught by Mr. Monpó, we spent the entire course without learning anything.

We practiced fresco painting, buying some plaster boards prepared to receive the mortar, without knowing in what quantities we had to mix the lime with the sand, or how long the lime had been macerating. We also did not know if the powdered pigments that were used, diluted in water, were of good quality or if their texture was greasy or dry, without knowing what treatment we had to give them.

Then came tempera painting and then oil on tempera. It did not explain whether the tempera layer had to be very textured or not, since many times the oil was too diluted and the tempera cracked. Actually, we passed the course without having the slightest idea of what we were doing.

There was a big difference between the teaching staff from the practical classes to the theoretical ones.

There were professors of coloring, drawing, and landscape, who in addition to being mediocre artists, did not know how to teach. I attended the exhibitions that these professors carried out, throughout the course, in various galleries in Valencia, and I was disappointed to see some soft paintings, out of concept, mannered, with the wrong composition, and I did not understand how they could be teaching in the School of Fine Arts.

I met Genaro Lahuerta the last two months of the Colorido Preparatory course. He put a still life, well composed, with cardboard carnival masks and a cap. That course, my grade in his subject was Honors. I did not have him as a teacher again until in the 2nd year, after he obtained the 1st national medal, for a portrait by Azorín, and due to the death of Tuset, he obtained the Color and Composition class. In classes, he placed the figures and compositions of the models very well, but when it was time to correct, he passed by, muttered something, and left. I perceived a certain suspicion, on his part, of my facility in painting. Perhaps his relationship with some "characters" from Alcoy, who at that time considered themselves connoisseurs of art, –of these always exist and at all times– who were not supporters of my painting also had an influence.



Beltrán, a teacher of "Drawing in Movement", was strong, rude and well-versed in his subject, he knew how to connect very well with the students. In his class I learned a lot.

My relationship with Felipe María Garín, professor of Art History and director of S. Carlos, was very positive, a friendship that continued after finishing my studies.

Almost 80 students started the degree and 14 finished. I practically had camaraderie with everyone, but close friends, only one, although later, political circumstances and exile ended our friendship.

I remember that in 1950, the Valencia City Council organized exercises and cash prizes for students in various courses. For the first-year Color and Composition students, a middle-aged model was sought, dressed in village clothes, a headscarf and a large basket of apples. I, on a 81 x 100 cm canvas, captured a figure of fresh color, very harmonious lines, well bound, and with a broad concept. But someone was in charge of spreading throughout S. Carlos, that I was the son of a millionaire and did not need the prize money, and since only two of us had applied, the prize was awarded to the student who needed it the most. The jury consisted of Mr.

Mayor, D. José Manglano Selva, as president; D. Adolfo Cámara Ávila, as councilor of the Hon. City Council and the teachers of the School Mr. Manuel Moreno Gimeno, Mr. José Américo Salazar, and Mr. Adolfo Ferrer Amblar. A few days after the ruling, D. José Américo came to see me in class, and told me that my painting had been liked a lot, but some circumstances had prevented me from being awarded the prize.

However, D. Adolfo Cámara had loved my work and asked me if I would have no objection to giving him the painting. Despite the fact that it hurt me a lot, which I considered an injustice, I gave up the work.

Total, that when I finished the race, naturally I had learned something. Daily exercise, painting or drawing for a whole course, takes many hours after five years, and practice gives you manual dexterity. But I had to discover my painting.

A stage of my life was coming to an end, that life in the "Casa de la Troya", as a student worried about exams and sweetened with the amusements of youth, of happy meetings, where each one contributed their ingenuity, with caricatural imitations, telling jokes and jokes, with jokes, sometimes too heavy. "Joyful song of youth"

I was on the threshold of a new stage in my life, which had to be the one that I forged, the one that I outlined and channeled in order to demonstrate that the art that I felt and that I carried inside would have to emerge. But he didn't know how or when. I imagine that everyone has gone through that state. I was confident in my good work, but where to develop it?

Naturally, the first stumbling block I was going to run into was military service, I didn't like it, but I had no other choice. My father had a close friend who was in the military, and he told him that if Spain won the lottery, he could fix it, but he should pray that Morocco didn't win, because he couldn't do anything. It is clear that I did not pray enough, number 1 was the last name BITO, and from there it began to count.

I got number 72, Africa. When my father told me on the phone, frankly, I felt bad.

I belonged to the quinta del 50, but because of my studies and not wanting to join the university militias, I had requested extensions, and I joined the quinta del 52.

The transfer conditions from Alcoy to Ceuta were truly subhuman. I imagine that it entered the minds of the high commands of the army.

You have to be soldiers from hair to chest, not be afraid of anything, neither discomfort, nor adversity!

We left the Caja de Recruits around three in the afternoon, carrying a wooden suitcase on our shoulders and walking to the Estación del Norte. A freight train was waiting for us there. The wagons had no seats, no services. Nothing at all, a little straw on the floor as the only comfort. Then I understood that of "a sheep train". We arrived at Játiva, and there we got off, to wait for another train of the same conditions, with the recruits coming from Valencia. The train was very long, it took us several days, they put us in sidings to make way for the express trains with passengers. When our convoy passed another military train in the opposite direction, some recruits would lean out of the gates imitating the bleating of lambs, "beee, beee", and from the other train they would answer "beee, beee... to the slaughterhouse".

In a backpack we carried food for the days that the trip lasted. Spirits were fading and to cheer us up, a First Corporal got into the car at a stop and sang a stupid song for us to sing along with.

"I am a captain, of an English ship,  
In each port I have a woman.  
The blonde is phenomenal,  
and the brunette is not bad either."

When the spirits were down again, a new song:

"From Isabella and Ferdinand,  
The spirit prevails  
we will die kissing  
The sacred banner

With this train we got to Alcázar de San Juan, and there we got on another one that came from Madrid, but it had a second class carriage, for the military without rank. At some station, through horn loudspeakers, they told us that we were stopping for an hour, the time we took advantage of to run to the toilets, where there were a lot of people. That was nauseating, but since we were "the boyfriends of death", we didn't have to cower.

We finally arrived in Algeciras, badly slept, badly eaten, badly pissed on and badly shitted, and they put us on the "Virgen de África" ferry. Despite the many recruits I felt a terrible loneliness. I felt a thousand light years away from the things they told, from jokes, songs and pranks. The ship arrived at the docks of Ceuta, and there the army trucks were waiting for us and took us to what they called "the stove", located in the Jadú neighborhood. There the soldiers who acted as barbers were waiting for us, seated on some tables, so that our heads were at the height of their quick hands. They shoved us on our backs, while the razors shaved our heads, but in their haste, they shaved badly, leaving us locks of hair. The floor of the place had piles of black, blond, brown, red hair, which accumulated had a dusty brownish color.

They put us "naked" and kept us on our feet for more than an hour, waiting for the showers. Finally we entered, and they gave us a bar of soap for twenty, when you were soapy, they cut off the water and ran outside, to make room for others. Us

They gave out a change of clothes, so rough that it looked like sackcloth, some espadrilles and a khaki jumpsuit, without paying attention to the sizes, so that came the question: "change a small jumpsuit for one of a large size, or I have some 36-inch espadrilles and change for some 43". It looked like a Persian market.

Then they gave us a metal plate and a spoon and took us to the dining room to eat. I prefer not to tell what was there for dinner. Then to a large pavilion where the veterans had prepared metal trestles for us with wooden planks and jute mats. I lay down on the bed and it didn't take me a fraction of a second to fall asleep.

At that time in the Ceuta barracks, the veterans sang a song to receive the new recruits, and for each replacement only the date was changed, the music was "Cocidito madrileño" and the lyrics said:

*Fifths of 53 are  
already arriving,  
they come happy*

*To fulfill your duty, poor  
little ones, you don't know  
what awaits you  
from the moment  
you step foot in a barracks.  
Half a dozen nickel-plating barbers, pretty  
heads that, as they pass, leave  
you brighter than the moon. This is not a story,  
it's true.*

*Oh! Recruit what a sadness  
what a disappointment you  
have you think you are going to  
a wedding and then you regret it.  
The instruction that awaits you  
is from my father and lord.  
Instructor with a bad mood  
and the recruit, what a guy!  
You will have to peel potatoes,  
Guards and imaginary.*

*You will not enjoy the walk*

*You will not enjoy the walk*

*You will not see beautiful blackberries.*



*The blackberry "Louise" - 1953*

These days medical check-ups, typhus vaccines, pills against malaria and affiliations.

In our spare time we had to go to a barbershop in Ceuta to have our heads fixed, and days later, with everything completed and ready, they put us on trucks and took us to Tetuán, to begin the instruction that used to last three months, until the pledge of allegiance There I made new friends: Enrique Cerdá

Gordo, who was from Alcoy, a wonderful boy; Jordi Ferrer, Tomás Rosell, and Joan Badía, from the Catalan group; Toni Vaquer and Xim, from Mallorca; Paco Camarena Frau from Denia and Luis Mira, from Córdoba. Some have died, others have disappeared, with some I have a good relationship and a good memory of all.

The barracks were located in a part of Tetouan called Sania-Ramel, it was huge, large warehouses that housed army trucks, pavilions for soldiers and a large central patio.



*Sania- Ramel Barracks – Tetuan.*



*Ceuta Barracks*



*Victory Parade – Tetuan.*

In front of the barracks there was a bar where we were going to eat, since we had asked for a "reduction" in the kitchen, and that way we ate something better.

They appointed me an instructor for illiterates, of which there were a lot. They were given a syllabary and read: "my mom pampers me a lot". This sounded like a joke to some and they said: "cucha, my mother has not done this to me, in her whole fucking life", with a lot of effort they learned to read, write, and some accounts, but only add and multiply, since subtracting and dividing did not interest them.

The contact with Tetouan was extraordinary for me, since there were several ethnic groups, the Muslim, the Jewish and the Indian, and within them a division of families, tribes and beliefs.

There was the well-defined European city, with a modern city feel, and then the neighborhoods. The Jew, with his stalls, jewelry stores, tailor shops,

Street markets. The Muslims had their open-air markets, fruits, vegetables, butcher shops, Moorish kebabs, leather embossing workshops, and precious metals.

Color, a lot of color, white, red, damask fabrics, gauze, tulle, djellabas, wool taquíás, water carriers, santons, sellers of multicolored cookies with honey: green, pink and yellow and thousands of flies. Then the Indian market in the famous Calle de la Luneta. That was Aladdin's paradise. The shops were open until midnight. Everything was sold there, expensive and cheap.

"Crystal" stockings, thousands of watches of all brands. Lighters, (the famous Ronson.) Fountain pens, fabrics by weight, velvet of all colors, fabrics called sharkskin, French lace, carvings of Buddhas in sandalwood, ivory horns with carvings of elephants. Cosmetics for the ladies, the famous kool that the blackberries used to shade their eyes, nail polish of all brands and colors, sunglasses, shawls and tulle with gold threads, jewelry and costume jewellery, gold by weight, earrings and pendants with symbols of Fatima.

All kinds of people mixed in the streets. The ringing of the water carriers, the fruit callers, the smell of rose water from the barbershops. The smell of fried fish emanated from an almost nauseating hovel, accompanied by the monotonous and rubbery music of the llantine violin. Blackberries with djellabas and handkerchief on the face. Blackberries in white Blackberries in white and red striped fabrics, with large straw hats with laces and enormous strawberry trees, and with earrings so heavy that they had split the earlobe several times.

In the Alkazaba, the neighborhood of the whores, they showed their charms behind the bars of the windows, blackberries, black, olive, young and mature, calling and laughing to the recruits, offering as merchandise.

At the barracks they already gave us some talks about the dangers of the city, venereal diseases and the precautions to take.

We almost always visited the neighborhood in groups, but the cheapest thing was to have tea with several blackberries and some danced belly dance, then the "mama" would come out and say: "To hell or to the street, marecones."

There were alleys and nooks and crannies that made it respectful to walk through them. Tunnels and hiding places, deserted squares, streets where they did not know the sun. Mystery and silence.

Soon I began to draw on a large pad. I did landscapes that I saw from the barracks. Those blue mountains, clean of atmosphere and mist, farmhouses



*Studio photography – Tetouan.*

whitewashed with lime and blue. Neighborhoods with their minarets, from where the voice of the muezzin cut through the air.

In Príncipe I started painting in oil. That almost biblical landscape, with its reddish lands, or the green of the prickly pears and blackberries with pitchers on their heads that went to fetch water from the cistern. I soon caught the attention of many black-and-whites who came up to see me paint, and commented: "the paisa paints with ointments". They all had ringworm on their heads and they all wore green, blue and red ointments. But he had little time to paint, he ended up very tired from the days of gymnastics, instruction, marches, theoretical classes. We had to clean our Mauser, which had a secret number, like the bayonet, which we had to memorize, and whose loss or breakage was equivalent to almost life imprisonment.

On Sundays we went to Río Martín, the Tetuán beach, and thus we forgot about the monotony of the barracks. The barracks was filing you down, it was overwhelming you. Not exercising our intellect gradually reduced us to doing nothing, to a contagious indolence: domino games in the canteen, drinking wine and singing: "Asturias, dear homeland", "The Virgin of Guadalupe goes along the riverbank", "The inclusero " or the "Bayón", from the movie "Ana", which we accompanied by hitting the tables with our hands.

On July 18, they put us in our gala dress, navy blue, with a peaked cap, white gloves, and high boots. They gave us a carabiner and we climbed into the open trucks and seats prepared for a parade. It was the celebration of the Victory parade. When we passed in front of General Varela's rostrum, a voice shouted: View to the right! The General returned the greeting. The gallery was full of people, ladies in white hats, girls giggling hysterically, paunchy soldiers with their glittering bands and a large tapestry with the coat of arms of Spain, while the military band played the "Heroína" march, with trumpets and drums. The heat was unbearable.

Around this time I also remember three acts of "heroic courage" that were prepared for us in the barracks: One day a group of sapper soldiers appeared at the compound, a body specialized in detecting mines, hidden artifacts, and their explosions. They gathered us all in the courtyard and explained to us what land mines consisted of, how they were made, how many parts they were made up of and how to detect them. To this end, they scattered some buried mines on a hill near the barracks, so that in a practical exercise we would find out better. They warned us that when we heard the voice of mine!, we would throw ourselves on the ground until the specialists exploited it. There we went, the sappers in front, the commanders behind, and then all of us. We were a lot of people and suddenly, mine! We ran away, like in a stampede, at full speed, while the commanders yelled at us: Come back here, you bastards! fagots! Cowards! And so up to five times.

After this, we had to conquer a hill dragging ourselves with the rifle, up the hill, while some planes were machine-gunning. We would be about sixty soldiers up the hill, except for one who was crawling down the hill. What is that bastard doing that instead of going "up, he goes down"? –My First, I lost my wallet and I'm going to see if I can find it!– Insults and curses.

Another day, four huge tanks came to the courtyard of the barracks, and they explained to us how they worked, how they advanced, what the chains were for. And to carry out the practices we went out to the field and they formed us in rows of four deep. Meanwhile, some soldiers dug a 1.50 m trench. wide, by 2 m. long and 1.50 m deep. Shouting and running, the four soldiers in the first row got into the ditch, while a tank passed over, we came out

running behind the tank to climb on it, avoiding the chains, and jump to the other side. While a voice shouted bastards, don't be afraid, there are empty beds in hospitals!

Another day we had to go to the shooting range, to check our aim that had to appear in the affiliation. In trucks they took us to the shooting range, they gave us ten rounds of ammunition and we loaded the rifle, waiting for our turn to shoot. At sixty meters, the targets were placed, made up of a metal frame and a wrapping paper with the painted targets. They were shooting, we were a group of ten, and I remember the dust that the bullets raised in their trajectory. Then we would come closer to see the impacts we had hit and we would stay next to the target. Mine was intact. Without thinking, I bent down, picked up a bullet and quickly put ten holes in my target, and stood to the side. When the sergeant and the first corporal came, they were amazed, and automatically, "1st marksman", which would figure in my affiliation.



*Dwell at the bus station*

At the end of July it was the official act of the Jura de Bandera. We perform the obligatory ceremonial. Ritual words, parades, step under the Flag, we kiss it. The act was great and for me, emotional. We were already soldiers.

Then came destination: Melilla, Larache or Ceuta. My friends and I went to the Automobile Barracks, nº 4, located on Cuesta Otero in Ceuta. They installed us in some wooden barracks, full of bedbugs, that had a uralite roof and little ventilation, and distributed us, some to the kitchen, others to offices, and some to assistants.

They called the office "majority", full of tables and typewriters, boxes of tracing paper, packages of sheets of paper and a lot of affiliations to complete. There they assigned us to Enrique Gordo, Toni Vaquer Moll, Jorge Ferrer and some others. We were under the command of Sergeant Moreno, a Brigade, Captain Amador, a Commander and Lieutenant Colonel. When something did not go well, or there was a mistake due to the closing date of the affiliations, or due to misinterpretation of an order, the Lieutenant Colonel yelled at the Commander, the latter at the Captain, the Captain at the Brigade, who in turn yelled at the Sergeant and, naturally, the Sergeant to the clerks. In all the problems, those of us who paid, "the broken dishes", were the soldiers of the office. Arrests, peeled to zero, denial of permits or dungeon.

Before going to the military, I had arranged an exhibition. My first painting exhibition, at the Grifé & Escoda Gallery in Barcelona, at the beginning of 1954. And the same exhibition was organized at the Círculo Industrial de Alcoy, to show my countrymen the work that I was taking to Barcelona.

At the beginning of December they gave us two months leave, that is, we were going to spend Christmas at home.

The permit ended on January 31, so I wrote to Captain Amable, asking him for ten more days of extension, and I sent him a catalog. He answered me quickly, granting me permission and congratulations.

In the newspaper CIUDAD, from Alcoy, Critón, I commented on my exhibition as follows:

*“On the 27th, the exhibition that our countryman Ramón Castañer gave us of his exquisite art was closed. This series of canvases instilled in the souls of the people of Alcoy a solid hope: that the glorious artistic tradition that our people began with Antonio Gisbert and Plácido Francés had not been extinct, as many thought. Ramón Castañer supposes, with new ideas and new ways, a fine regrowth of the so-called <<Alcoyana school>>. Painting has been, after all, Alcoy's most valuable contribution to national culture.*

*Castañer's art has been a true revelation for everyone. Trained in the Valencian school, he has managed to escape a great danger that surrounded him: Sorollismo. The atmosphere of his landscapes have transparencies, but it is not the dazzling <<plen air>>. He prefers the warm palette, of soft blues <<scenographic of the street of Príncipe de Maroc>> like those almost delicate cubes or, sometimes, the ashen and zuloagesque tones like the titled <<The gray hour>> that distance us a little of the Mediterranean tradition.*

*For this reason, his greatest achievements are achieved in the paintings of figures, with lines sometimes serious and other times winged, but always done with a great poetic sense. The nine canvases that he presents in this genre give us the impression of perfect maturity (especially in the magnificent portrait of his girlfriend) and we affirm that this is the way in which the artist finds his most authentic expression. Based on simple anecdotes (the unemployed person looking for a job, the poor violinist, the ballet dancer), Castañer becomes a true poet of color. The musician's pants, satin slippers, a first term of books are resources for the most fantastic harmonies of nuances, which sometimes make us think, as in the Stravinskyana, in the chromaticism of his teacher Segrelles, and others like << Ads by words >> in the crude expression of Toulouse-Lautrec.*

*However, Castañer's personality is clearly defined in all his canvases by an exquisite workmanship and a conception that seems effortless.*

*Another interesting aspect of this exhibition is the aquatints and pastels. Those that bear the title of <<Fátima>> and <<Mulata rumbera>> are a clear manifestation of the scope that the art of illustration could have in this artist, for which we believe him especially gifted.*

*In general, the whole exhibition was a success. Although the periods and styles are diverse, they remain perfectly linked in this poetic conception of the figure and the color that we have already mentioned, which makes Castañer a pure artist and his painting an intelligent plastic”.*

In Barcelona I presented my first exhibition. Naturally he was nervous, but sure. Mr. Massot, artistic manager of the room, congratulated me on the whole of my work, which had impressed him. The catalog had a presentation by the painter Segrelles. The room was very large, and was considered one of the most important galleries.

All the press covered my exhibition: “Momento”, with a review by J. Soler Poch; “National Solidarity”, “La Vanguardia”, “Correo Catalán”, “El Mundo



Deportivo”, “Noticiero Universal” and Juan Francisco Bosch, on Radio España in Barcelona, in his section “The artistic year of Barcelona” made an extensive commentary on my work. The exhibition was echoed in “Las Provincias” and “Levante” in Valencia, “Información” in Alicante, and naturally, “Ciudad” and “Radio Alcoy”.

Once the exhibition closed I returned to Alcoy, with good artistic and financial success.



*"Sad song" 1954; 1.50 x 1.50m*

I had completed my permit and the requested extension, and I began my return to the Ceuta barracks, taking with me the shipping list and the letter from the captain to justify the delay. At the Algeciras border crossing there was no one, no guards, no civil guards, no control, no customs, nothing, no one. I was the only traveler. I went through the corridors, without presenting the documentation, I got to the ferry and after a while I was already at the Ceuta dock, and again at the barracks.

The group of friends, we met a Catalan couple, D Ricardo Oriol y Fábregas and D<sup>a</sup>. Marta Lloveras, whom we visited on Sunday afternoons, had snacks, and listened to music between friendly conversations.

The group was made up of four Catalans, two from Mallorca and two from Alcoy. They had a musical team and some extraordinary pieces. They commissioned me some pictorial works, which I did at their home. When they were going to graduate us, I drew them a parchment, where we all signed.

That marriage of pleasant memories, which sweetened the Sundays of the milli!

In June 1954 I graduated. I found myself back at my parents' house, and although it may seem impossible, that license that you want so much, when you return to your usual life, you do not fit in, you are not the same as before the military, the only thing that did not change was my love for Pepe It happened to me, what later has been called "the Stockholm syndrome". Missing a barracks life. That being part of a machine, which moves in an innocuous way, without interest, without passion, with routine. The routine that forms automata, without soul. But living without responsibilities is also a way of life.

## CHAPTER IV

*Your hand with my hand, your ring  
with my ring, such an intimate  
ceremony, in a space so ours.*

*A. Baeza Flores*



Naturally, he had to find somewhere to give drawing classes. And I found it at the Luis Vives School–Academia Tecnos, that place where I had spent part of my life. I entered the Commerce section, as a teacher of linear and artistic drawing in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years.

I gave private classes, and I also had students in my studio in the Plaza de S. Francisco. I resumed the course of painting and at this time I painted several portraits.

At the beginning of the year, the IV National and Provincial Painting Contest was held in Alicante, and I presented the work "Sunset" An Alcoy sunset with roofs, chimneys, the Çinc ravine, a greyish, indecisive light and a soft *twilight*. He was awarded the 1st Provincial Medal. The news was communicated to me by telegram: *"Thursday thirty-first, the distribution of prizes will take place in the National–Provincial Painting Contest thirteen thirty hours Point Awarded to you Silver Medal Please Attend Point Congratulations and regards. Artemio Payá"*



*"Sunset" 1st Alicante Provincial Medal, 1954*

At S. Jorge parties, I met Adolfo Bernabeu, he dressed as Mozarabic and I as Abencerraje. –When parties are over, come see me in the office to talk about a project–. I did so, I went to see him and he explained to me that the altar dedicated to S. Pancraccio in the church of María Auxiliadora, was under the guardianship of the Bernabeu family, and they had thought that I would paint a large mural about some event in the life of the holy.

We went to the church to see the chapel that I had to paint. On an altar, there was a marble column that supported a polychrome carving of the Saint, the work of a Catalan sculptor, a two-meter-high marble plinth that ran through the chapel, which had a semicircular shape, and a quarter sphere formed the vault. In addition to painting, I had to take care of the decoration: lights, plaster, spotlights, gold...

It was the first time that I was going to face a large space, to fill it with my painting. I was very excited, and I began to capture ideas, conceive shapes, distribute spaces. I made many sketches, and I conceived the idea of making the obligatory curved plane disappear through perspective.

I divided the theme into three scenes, which formed an equilateral triangle.

I spent the summer making sketches of all sizes. I looked for models of all ages, for the boy Pancraccio, for the elderly, as well as for women. I made a rather large sketch, (2 x 1.50 m), I drew the composition, and I dressed the people in Roman robes. I looked for knotted sandals, chlamydes, peplos. On smaller canvases (100 x 81 cm), I painted the sky with the cross and two angels and on another, the side of the Saint's burial.

When Adolfo Bernabeu saw them, he liked them very much and gave me his consent to carry out the work.

I was studying the procedure to use. Fresh paint?. The painter who uses this procedure must work with a mason who knows the materials. The fresco mortar uses a mixture of lime and sand. It is necessary to know the maceration time of the lime and add the corresponding proportion of sand. Otherwise, if the mixture is done poorly, there is a risk that the paint will crack.

Oil on the wall was very laborious, as it is a very absorbent material with the problem of having to use a lot of paint.

Finally I came to the conclusion that the best thing would be, the canvas attached to the wall. I looked for a saddler, we measured the square meters and it turned out, 80 m<sup>2</sup>. Some masons assembled the scaffolding with planks and wooden sleepers, which formed three floors. When I saw the walls covered with the canvas, that white seemed infinite to me. Everything I had sketched had to be enclosed in that curved space, similar to a herd of bulls advancing towards me.

I started drawing. I had the sketches with me. I made some fixes on the fly. And when everything was drawn on the canvas, in my imagination, I already saw the finished set. Just as I had conceived it. He was impatient to pick up the palette and start painting.

I started the mural with the figure of the saint, and from there I was toning and qualifying the figures that complemented the scene of his baptism. Over the years, with more experience, I realize the successes and failures. One of the mistakes is having placed the floor where the figures rest. If the general vision is from the upper line of the marble plinth that surrounds the altar, it means that the point of view is below the horizon line and the geometric plane goes from the marble to the point of view. The lines of flight are descending, therefore, the geometric plane on which the characters rest cannot be seen.

But the great success of that work of youth, is the composition, distribution and the courageous execution of the work.

The mural is divided into three scenes: On the left side is the baptism of the child Pancraccio by Pope Saint Marcellinus, accompanied by patricians, old men and Roman maidens. On the right side is represented the

burial of the saint after martyrdom. The body of the saint is carried, on a white canvas after his stoning. The entire scene is bathed in the soft light of the rosy and ocher tints of the Roman sunset. Two angels complement the scene: one carrying the palm of martyrdom and the other with the testimonial book on which it is read.

*"Come ad me et ego dabo vobis omnia bona"*. And in the central part, which forms the upper cap, three "percherones" angels appear, which contrast with the weightlessness of their figures, in daring foreshortenings. The scene is finished off by a cross on a flamboyant background in aerial perspective and a large hanging cloth, which will appear in all my murals, finishes off the whole.

The completion of the work lasted several months, and on April 17, 1955, the scaffolding was dismantled, leaving the mural in sight. We plan to celebrate the inauguration on May 3, the feast day of San Pancracio.



*Mural San Pancracio M. Auxiliadora Alcoy – 1953; 80 m2*

In this month of April I received a communication from the Alcoyano Institute of Culture, "Andrés Sempere"

that said: *At the meeting held by the Governing Board of this Alcoyano Institute of Culture, on March 18, it was unanimously agreed to name him Deputy Member of the Plastic Arts Section.*

*In order to start the work entrusted to the aforementioned Section, I hope you will contact Mr. José Cortés Miralles.*

*What I am pleased to bring to your attention for the appropriate purposes.*

*God keep you for many years*

*Alcoy, April 15, 1955*

*THE PRESIDENT*

*Signed, initialed and seal of the Institute.*

On April 23, in the middle of the San Jorge festivities, I met Adolfo, he dressed as Mozarabic and I dressed as Abencerraje, he hugged me and congratulated me on my work, of which he was the promoter. It was the last time I saw him.

On April 26, there was a bus accident in one of the curves of the port of Albaida, and "Adolfito" Bernabeu was traveling on that bus. When I found out about his death, in addition to the shock and pain for the loss of a friend, I thought that I had no document of the commitment of the altar, and I was in charge of the delivery notes and receipts for the works, the scaffolding, electricians, plasterers and gilders. Naturally, all concerned came to see me, somewhat worried. I went to speak with Ernesto Pastor, who was in Adolfo's office, and explained the situation to him. The next day, he called me to let me know that it had been resolved. Mr. Adolfo Bernabeu, father, took care of everything.

On May 3 the altar was inaugurated. What was to be a glory mass was cut short in a song of "dies irae, dies illa". Catafalque and black dalmatics, mourning and regret. Later, a bronze plaque was placed on one side of the altar, which reads: *"To the memory of Adolfo Bernabeu Espí"*

Pepa and I were preparing the wedding. We had planned to get married in June. Pepa's father, Mr. Rafael Botella Sempere, an excellent person, friendly, approachable, a good conversationalist and a better giver of good advice, was the personification of the father I would have wanted to have, if I had been able to choose, he bought the apartment for us in the one we were going to live.

My father could not reciprocate as he would have wanted, because the economic situation of my house was very bad, but I had finished collecting the 25,000 Ptas. from the altar and I told him not to worry that I would supply the necessary expenses.

The wedding date was scheduled for June 27, 1955, Monday, 10 in the morning, in the church of San Jorge.

I designed Pepa's wedding dress. On a black cardboard, I made a drawing with white gouache. It was of classic bearing. Satin and chantilly lace. The straight skirt, which stylized her already slender figure, was gathered at the back in a large fold to form the long train. The lace bodice, fitted at the waist, extended over the skirt and was gathered in folds on the sides, with small flowers, ending behind in an incipient bustle. The headdress was very original. A small satin cap, with a half-moon hole in the back, for the bow, which Pepa has always worn.

And from which the tulle of the veil came out, like a waterfall.

Now, as we are about to celebrate our golden wedding anniversary, we sometimes look at our wedding album, with the black and white photographs, and we feel happy, as we were that day.

The suit was made for her by Odette, a dressmaker who sewed for Pepa and who knew how to interpret my drawing like a great dressmaker.

And finally the big day arrived. I was waiting, with my mother, at the door of the church for the arrival of the bride's car. There were a lot of people on the street, and when the driver opened the door, through which Pepa came out, I didn't know if it was her or an angel who stood up in all her splendor. Calm, smiling and with a very elegant demeanor, she gave her father her arm and the organ began to play. The ritual step began, to the bars of the wedding march. The altar was beautiful, white flowers, decorations and lights, and a small image of the Miraculous Virgin that presided over the altar.

After the banquet. Greetings, congratulations and the dance. Pepa and I started it to the beat of "Night and Day", by Cole Porter, our song, and the room was filled with laughter, joy and bliss.



Officiated the ceremony D.

José Arnauda, who had been our religion teacher during high school. Signed as witnesses, Mr. Enrique Oltra Moltó, Mayor of Alcoy; my father, Manuel Castañer Abad; d.

Joaquín Santana, Colonel of the Vizcaya Infantry Regiment of Alcoy, and Mr. Francisco Vilaplana Cantó, who had also been our Philosophy and Latin teacher.

The friendship between Enrique Oltra and my father went back a long time. In 1952 municipal elections were called, to elect the representatives of the people, within the party. My father was elected councilor. Then he was mayor of Alcoy D. Enrique Albers Vicéns, and in February 1954 Enrique Oltra Moltó was appointed mayor. Since then, united by collaboration in service work, they were also united by friendship.



Church of San Jorge (Alcoy) – 1955.

In my house, we had been very happy about that choice, because we thought that public office would keep my father from alcohol, but he knew how to share both perfectly.

I have to recognize my father, his absolute honesty in office. He never allowed a gift, not a gift. He was deputy mayor and fiestas and with the same authoritarianism, with which he imposed the hangings on the balcony in my house, during the eleven days that José Antonio's transfer lasted, from Alicante to Madrid, he told my mother. *"A Christmas basket does not enter the house, nor a box of cigars, nor a gift, that they come because of the ostentation of my position."*

He was upright with his ideology, he was a José Antoniano, with whom he had lived, as with his brother Miguel Primo de Rivera, during his time in captivity in the Alicante Provincial Prison.

He was an idealist. According to what he told us, one night the doors of José Antonio's cell were left unguarded to facilitate his escape, but José Antonio's death was already accepted by him and by the Party. Aware that their sacrifice would be the seed that would germinate in the Falangist ideology.

My father was an altruist, who never cared about money, and if he had it, he spent splendidly with friends, without worrying about improving the family situation.

I remember that one day, he showed my mother an amount of money that he had just received from the business and she said to him: *"Oh, Manolet, - that was what he affectionately called him sometimes - this could help the boy."* It was winter, and in the

The stove was on in the dining room, my father opened the lid of the stove, and threw the wad of bills inside. *"That matters to me about money,"* he said.

My mother almost went crazy and burned her hands while trying to remove a possible well being that was devouring the flames.

I am sure that his time at the City Council did not bring him any economic benefit, but he filled his vanity with the gala uniforms at official events.

When he believed that his permanence in office could not benefit anyone due to discrepancies, he submitted his resignation to the mayor, Enrique Oltra, of whom he had been a great friend.

My father's financial situation was getting worse. Synthetic fibers had appeared, and wool no longer had the same acceptance. My father did not know how to evolve, or did not want to see the future.

I solved the wedding trip. We went to Valencia and from there to Córdoba to take the ferry and get to Ceuta. I wanted to show Pepa the part of African Spain that I had known in the military.

Córdoba captivated us, it was Andalusia, stately and Moorish. It would take us a few years to visit it again. The Christ of the Lanterns, sung in verses and poems. The Mosque, impressive architecture of Muslim art

A colleague from the military, Luis Mira, had found us the hotel. I remember that one day when we went to eat at his house, his mother prepared Andalusian gazpacho for us. It was the first time we had tried it, but they served it to us for dessert, and to be honest, I had to praise their excellencies for their kindness in serving us typical food, but I didn't like it. I confess that now it is one of my favorite meals in summer.

A sister of Luis, accompanied us through the alleys, visiting the most typical of Córdoba. The Calleja de las Flores, the Museum of Fine Arts with the works of Romero de Torres. The painter par excellence of Andalusianism, the copla, the mystery. What Cordovan girl did not sigh to be a model for D. Julio? Antonia la Pelá, in "Gypsy Muse"; "Trini's granddaughter", in her traditional nude. Dora, the Cordobesita; Empire Shepherdess; Maria Caballe; Luisa Astolfi in "A naked woman and a guitar". His painting was the personification of the couplet.

*Julio Romero de Torres  
painted it to dream.  
A carnation on her breasts  
And some lips to kiss.*

After Algeciras and the ferry, "Virgin of Africa", I knew it, but what a difference from going as a soldier to traveling as a tourist. On the crossing of the Strait we saw a family of dolphins that jumped with undulating pirouettes, as if welcoming us.

In Ceuta the Oriol family was waiting for us, D<sup>a</sup>. Marta and D. Ricardo, who received us with congratulations and did not allow us to go to any hotel. They took us to their home, and we were there as honored guests. We got to know a Ceuta that I, in my military time, did not get to know. We went up to Hacho, where Franco's monolith was; Benzú, with the "sleeping woman"; to Viña Acevedo; Benitez Beach; the Hadú neighbourhood, with its Muslim typicality; and we even visited with them the two representative cabarets of Ceuta, "La Parisién" and "El Eritaña".

We spent some unforgettable days, and we will always keep in our hearts, the affection for such pleasant friends, who are now in our memory.

I gave myself the pleasure of visiting the barracks. Pepa and I presented ourselves at the main door, and went up to the offices, where I had served in the military. We were received by Ana's lieutenant, an excellent person, attentive, polite, who was very happy to see me again and to meet my wife. In our conversation, well-known names of those who formed the group of friends arose. When he escorted us out of the barracks, I felt the satisfaction of saying goodbye as a person and not as a subordinate.

After several days of staying in Ceuta, we went to Tetuán. I enjoyed teaching Pepa everything I knew. She loved "La Luneta" street, with its small shops, so full of merchandise, where you could just as well buy a carved gold bracelet, or a few meters of lace or velvet. Everything was new to her and I saw everything new through her eyes.

I wanted him to get to know Xauen, the small Moroccan city, so suggestive and so different depending on the neighborhoods you visit: the Jewish and the Moorish, within the walls. Chefchaouen is considered the "holy city" by the Kabileños. I knew it well, because there I had made several notes, which I had already used in my first exhibition. Our meal was typically Moorish, complete couscous and dates with honey. We have always wanted to return to those cities, but our travels have taken us to other places.

We returned to Spain from Tetuán Sevilla. The city of the Guadalquivir. One day when leaving the hotel we met a tour guide who was nice to us and we toured the city with him. Plaza Elvira, the Giralda, with all its dependencies; The golden tower; some steps of holy week, the Macarena, the Christ of the Great Power and the step of San Juan with the Virgin. For several days he accompanied us on our tour. The Plaza de la Maestranza, the Calleja de la Muerte, and he showed us the supposed convent where D<sup>a</sup>. Inés, in the work of Mr. Juan Tenorio, –while reciting part of the scene on the sofa for us–. During the hot nights, we drank some "slush", which he asked for with his lisping tone.

Then the park of María Luisa accompanied by its corresponding recitative:

*Listen, friend: have you  
been in Seville?  
Have you seen the María  
Luisa Park?  
What don't you know?  
What have you not been there?  
Well... you don't know  
what a garden is No,  
sir; I tell  
you...*

When we were back in Alcoy and settled in our house, we couldn't believe that we could go out alone after dinner, and sometimes act as "carbines" for couples of friends who had not yet married, like Lolín and Antonio Revert, or Julia and Antonio Aracil.



*María Luisa Park (Seville) - 1955*

Precisely, this last couple was with us, a few summer days when we had rented an apartment in Benidorm. Julia's parents agreed to let them come because, once we were married, we gave respectability to the wedding couple.

Back then, Benidorm was not the mammoth tourist center that it is now. Benidorm was still a fishing village, without apartments, or unsightly towers, that people were beginning to discover.

The apartment we rented was in a recently built house, in fact, we opened it for the first time, and its windows opened onto the market. From them we chose the type of fish that we were going to buy. The room that Tono occupied faced a patio with lights and in front of his windows, others of the adjoining house opened. Three scantily clad foreign girls peered into them, unintentionally or wanting to. -They were the first years of a tourism that astonished the Spaniards so constrained by censorship-. In order not to draw the attention of Pepa and "Juli", Tono said: *Ramón, are you going to smoke a cigarette?* It was our password. And how many cigarettes we smoke!

I remember this now, not because it may be anecdotal, but because I remember an extraordinary friend, who is no longer with us, but who continues to be a fraternal friend.

Pepa's parents spent the summer in Agres. I got to know the little town in 1948. It was the month of August. One Sunday, I took the train at half past six in the morning and at seven I was on the station platform. Pepa's brother came out to greet me, he was carrying a donkey to carry my luggage and when he left the platform, he said to me: "See, that little white dot on the mountain, which is in front of us? So here we go." It seemed very far to me. We started the path that led us to the town. Not by road, but by a shortcut, by which it took us three quarters of an hour to get there. Since at that time it was frowned upon for a recent boyfriend to stay at the girlfriend's house, they found me a house in the town where I could eat and sleep. Josefina, the daughter of the sharecroppers, and her husband Enrique, were my hosts.

We, to see each other, had to be accompanied.

The little town seemed like a fairy tale. There was a bar where the coffee was still made in a saucepan, and it was ground, placing it between the pages of a newspaper and dragging a bottle of aniseed over it with force.

The apothecary, was the telegraph operator, and his house, a store of everything. Fabrics, antiques, jewelry, ointments, medicines, and the tick-tock of the telegraph, which at times sounded insistent, because she was somewhat deaf.

There was also a cinema. The "Ideal Cinema". The films were announced on a board in the square: "Tonight great premiere, "Tosca", with Imperio Argentina." The chairs were made of cattail and the most amazing thing was that you could smoke. The rays of the projection were filled with capricious volutes, which twisted and were outlined in the white of the light. For ventilation, doors were opened that overlooked the ravine.

On Sundays, mass at the Convent of the Virgen de Agres, Pepa introduced me to Father Manuel, a short, chubby friar. One summer, he found out that I was a painter and asked me, like that, "mouth pitcher": "Let's see when a Virgin of Agres paints me". "When I get married," I told him.

And that summer of 1955, remembering the promise I made to him in his day, I painted a Virgin of Agres. In the month of September we went up to the Convent and gave Father Manuel the painting, an oil painting measuring 125 x 75 cm, and which is now placed above the door of the chandelier.

I got along very well with all of Pepa's family. His siblings were my siblings and his parents my second parents. Rafael and Concha were two extraordinary people, familiar, affordable, homelike, simple and very

humans. I needed parents like that, and soon I became a son, not a political one, but a true one, out of affection and care. They have already died, and I have the honor to say that never, not once, have I had a discussion with them.

I have always respected and loved them. I remember that Pepa's mother told me: "I love you very much, because I see that you love my daughter very much."

The unforgettable family summers in Agres, which, thank God, continue to be part of our lives, only then, we were young and everything seemed simple to us.

The ascent to the convent from the farmhouse was a walk. One kilometer to l'Azud, the steep "esquellerola", the guard's house, the gentle ascent of the cypress walk, the last slope and the arch, before starting the final steps and everything, regardless of the midday sun.

*Don't wander to the fair  
If you don't have  
money, go to the Mare Déu  
d'Agres. If you don't have promises.*

Now we continue going up to the convent, but we no longer do it on foot. The cars have finished with the gatherings and the greetings at the end of mass and meeting for the afternoon excursion to the "Molí Mató", "l'Alficosset" "la Mola". How many meetings did my sister-in-law, Conchita, entertain at the piano at my in-laws' house.

The truth is, with fewer comforts, life was more peaceful. The beaches had not yet caught on. The doctors recommended the mountains and the pure air of the countryside.

I had all the time in the world to paint. I painted landscapes of the town, of the valley of Agres; peasants in the summer sun; the backlight of the pine forest with an almost Japanese sunset, and we still had time to sit around the bowls stuffed with tomatoes and make preserves, while my father-in-law entertained the meeting by telling us stories, or to listen to the gossip of "Aunt Isabel", midwife of the house, always with her spark and her popular wit. I remember that on one occasion Brother Eugenio, who came home a few times, wanted to sit with us to help with the preserves, and the landlady told him sardonically: *Harmano, come in and call them mans.* "Les tinc netes," replied the lay brother. *—It's just that I don't know if p'el camí, s'ha tocat the budellet—.*

In Alcoy, the Municipal School of Fine Arts was set up, which was located in the classroom of a local, in the Uxola neighborhood. I was in charge of the center and teaching drawing. I tried to create a good atmosphere, and I connected with the students, directing them and indicating the successes or corrections of their work, and it seems to me that it was possible to create a school. There a group of students formed who tried, excited, to perfect their artistic qualities. To this group belonged: Jorge Valor, Paco Barrachina, Benigno Andreu, Vicente Moya, María Luisa Pérez, Alejandro Soler, Mataix, Lloréns Ferri, Rafael Ferri Richart and others.

Perhaps it would be in May 1956. The architect, D. Roque Monllor, called me to present a project to me. In the newly rebuilt parish of Santa María, precisely according to his design, the mural painting and the complete ornamentation of the presbytery had been included. Whose budget was going to cover a couple from Alcoy, D. Remigio Albors and his wife Milagro Silvestre, including the restoration of two large oil paintings by the painter Oliete that were already listed in the

destroyed parish. And they had thought that I would do the part of the altar murals.

We went to the church and I saw the different spaces distributed: in the apse, three panels, four lateral windows; and on the roof a large rectangle.

My ideas matured, and I saw that I could capture scenes from the life of the Virgin where I could include some joyful mysteries. On the front, the birth of the Virgin, with two thurifer angels. And then, following the holes, the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the birth of Jesus and on the ceiling, whose space was 9 x 6 m, the Assumption of the Virgin. Total, I had before me, 128 square meters to carry out my project.

While working on the sketches, the scaffolding was built with wooden planks and beams, tied together with ropes. As the walls of the chancel were already finished and it was not possible to lean on them, a scaffolding was built "under sail".

I began to paint the theme of the Assumption on the ceiling. Over a stormy sky, the Virgin is transported by angels to heaven in an explosion of color. There blonde angels, brown angels, cherubs and black angels signifying the universality of the Church. The Virgin raises her arms to receive the Holy Spirit, who, between a beam of lights, descends towards her.

The dogma of the Assumption, promulgated by Pius XII, was recent and I took advantage of the occasion to paint a large balustrade in aerial perspective. In the center Pius XII promulgating the dogma. Accompanied by the college of cardinals, under the stone canopy of an arch with the papal coat of arms in the center. Umbels, floating fabrics and fluttering doves ascending towards the sky. On one side the portrait of the parish priest, D. Manuel Llopis, and the acolyte, who holds a banner.

The portraits of Ramón Castañer and Pepa Botella complete this side, representing the town; Tono Aracil and Julia Juan; Salvador Pastor and Amalia Morán; Antonio Revert and Lolín Roma; the architect D. Roque Monllor. My parents, Manuel Castañer and Marina Segura, and Pepa's parents, Rafael Botella and Concepción Seguí.

On the left side the religious schools of Alcoy, the nuns of San Vicente de Paul, the Carmelites, and the Franciscans. An architectural complex finishes off the scenes.

During the execution of this panel I realized that a change was taking place within me in terms of the way of capturing the figures and in terms of the way of distributing the spaces. I was very interested in building the figures with planes that delimited their contours almost geometrically. Not like cubism. Cubism only gives geometric shape to spaces, and I was interested in spaces and their combinations with shapes. Therefore, the bodies had to weigh. I was not interested in weightlessness. I was interested in the simile of a kilo of iron, with the etherealness of a kilo of shavings. The shape, and therefore the space, had to be compact. And the panel of the Nativity of the Virgin appeared. All my pictorial grammar was captured there. The forms are tangible. The body of Santa Ana on the bed and the sheets that shape her body, with the figure of her husband, San Joaquín, who appears standing up, form the spatial ensemble. The scene is made up, by color and layout with the rectangle of the bed, the hard folds of a curtain that serves as the background and a piece of chalk that finishes off the curtain at the top, on which some doves rest, which are almost made of marble. .

The remaining figures form the first term. The comadres, the one who pours the water into the basin, the Virgin Mary herself, tiny but compact, in the arms of a lady, the whites of the fabrics and their folds are almost aluminum. Only the "girl"

who looks", that disturbing character, who appears in many of my works, like an index that points to the viewer, is saved from that rigidity, as his deep gaze softens it. Two angels complete the wall. One on his back with a censer in his hand and a graphic that reads: "*Sic amica mea inter filias*". The other, standing, head in profile, trapezoidal square nimbus and a table in his arms where one reads. "*Cum liliu inter spinas*"



*Murals of Santa María (fragment) Alcoy 1957 - Nativity of the Virgin*

Then I made the side windows. The first on the left is conceived as a representation of the scene, in a Renaissance form. The small Virgin and her parents behind; companions, an arch that symbolizes the temple and some cypresses in the background. Soft tones, violets, blues, very pale pinks, which contrast with the white dress of the Virgin girl. In the upper part, a group of angels that play their forms, with planes, spaces, folds of their clothes, and triangles of their wings.

The second exterior represents the Annunciation, stained glass type. A conjugation of blues in all its ranges. Flat and chiaroscuro. Like the explosion of a glass.

On the left: the Visitation, in warm tones, ocher, vermilion, and carmine. Saint Elizabeth at the top of a staircase and the Virgin ascending. Some trapezoidal angels crown the scene.

And in the last lunette, the birth of the Child Jesus. Dark tones, very dim lights, and musical angels.

My pictorial project was finished. A peanut-colored marble pavilion completed the decoration of the presbytery. Then I met the sculptor from Alcoy Tomás Ferrándiz and his wife Estrella. He was called to carry out the carving of the Virgin for the interior of the temple and he was working on the sketch on a clay model. We meet many times and talk about various projects.

Too bad that assignment did not come to a good end.



*From left to right: Camilo Bito, Tomás Ferrándiz, Estrella, Alfonso Saura, Antonio Revert, Ramón Castañer, Rafael Coloma.*

The scaffolding on which I had been working for over a year was 38 m high and swayed dramatically when I got excited about painting. When I heard the rungs crash against the wall, it was like a warning to stop.

A large cloth covered it and separated it from the rest of the church, isolating me in my work. D. Roque Monllor, went up sometimes to see how the murals were going, as well as the priest, D. Manuel Castelló, who was somewhat perplexed when he saw my pictorial style. The friend D. Rafael Coloma also came to make journalistic comments.

From the heights I observed the parishioners, who as now, the church was more visited by women and generally older, who calmly sat down and peered into their bags to find the rosary and whisper the mysteries.

When they left they used to go through different altars to touch the saint, in a fetishistic devotion. When there was a funeral, from above, I already knew if the burial was first class or third class, because the liturgical ornaments were different, and above all, the Gregorian chants sounded different.

From there I attended weddings, baptisms and communions. To the sermons, which the priests delivered from the pulpit on the occasion of various festivities: the triduum to Santa Rita, that of S. Carlos Borromeo, patron saint of the bench; the festivity of S Francisco Javier, Yes, Francisco Javier! Yeah! –said the priest– Yes, Francisco Javier! Yeah! You said yes! And we say Yes!

The son of the parish sacristan, Juan Tomás, who was a child at the time, would sometimes go up to the pulpit, when the church was empty, and gesticulate a sermon, without words. His arms moved up and down and from right to left, feeling like the greatest sacred speaker.

Then came the cleaners, who always told each other movies. One day it was the turn of "The Barefoot Countess". I saw a beautiful movie last night! It was from



that... that is called Ava..., I don't know what. She was a gypsy and a rich Italian falls in love and marries her. But I couldn't..., I couldn't... (Come let me whisper in your ear that we're in the church)– and he whispered something to her. -Do not tell me!. Good, good and good! What they put in the cinema now. Meanwhile, the dripping of the moles over the ponds and the dragging of the benches broke the heavy silence of the Church.

Detractors of the murals soon appeared. Among all of them, the most obstinate was the Colonel of the Infantry Regiment, Pedro Blanco Consuelo, who brandished the flag of insults against my colorful painting. –The paintings in the churches have to be dark and colorless!–.

The inauguration of the Presbytery took place at the beginning of the year 1958, with a solemn act. We couldn't attend as we were on our way to Paris.



## CHAPTER V

*Now I am going to tell  
you how I was also in Paris, and I was  
happy.*

*Jaime Gil de Biedma*



We had been planning the trip for a long time. Paris was the city desired by all artists.

We had a letter for an acquaintance of my father, Rodolfo Abad, who had previously found us accommodation and was to wait for us at the station. But when we arrived at the d'Austerlitz station, loaded with our luggage, the box of paints, a guitar, Pepa was wearing long pants, and I was wearing a checked coat and a cap, he did not identify us, and we did not know him.

When he came to look for us, already installed in the pension, that he knew. He told us that he never thought that a couple dressed like us could come from Alcoy. -He thought of an Alcoy, located in the year 1938. He did not imagine the evolution at the time-.

The truth is that in our subsequent conversations, we realized that this man had suffered a lot in his exile. He told us that when he arrived in France in 1939, he was put in a concentration camp guarded by Senegalese soldiers. When they released him, he went to Paris, but they didn't give him papers because he didn't have a job, and they didn't give him a job because he didn't have papers. During the German occupation they put him in the "Buchenwald" concentration camp, and he told us about the horrors he experienced: "I have seen -he told us- a man lose weight like a snake, to pass between the bars of a chair, while the "kapo", sitting and smoking, hit him with a baton. And I have seen human chains, made up of people holding hands, throw themselves against an electrified fence. We practically couldn't escape, there was almost no guard, but we were so depressed, they only gave us two dates a day, that we couldn't walk even ten meters. One day, we woke up to find no German soldiers. It was the liberation of the camp by the American soldiers. He had been a plumber, a bricklayer, an electrician, an elevator technician, but always in black work, he still did not have papers to work legally".

The first days, for us, were of bewilderment. Paris, from Alcoy, was huge. Our friend, Adrián Miró, who was at the Casa de España, accompanied us to get to know the city. We bought the metro cards that allowed us to tour Paris, and since we didn't like the lodging site we dedicated ourselves to looking for a new accommodation.

We found a small hotel in the Latin Quarter, "Hotel du Lys", in "rue Serpente", near "Odeon". The atmosphere of the neighborhood was pleasant, youth, students, "Self Service", shops, and the place found, welcoming. A very comfortable room, services and a window facing the street. Very quiet, almost no cars. You couldn't cook, but later we had nine people for dinner, and to hide the frying of the meat, in a small stove, I strummed the guitar loudly. There was no fridge, of course, but since the outside temperatures were always below freezing, with plastic bags, we placed perishable foods on the outside of the window.

I quickly began to draw and Pepa enrolled in l'Alliance Francaise. We would take the metro at the St. Michele station, towards Porte D'Orleans, she would get off at the stop near l'Alliance, and I with my drawing pad under my arm would go through the neighborhoods that I considered interesting. alleys of the

Latin Quarter, views of the Seine with its barges, S. André des Arts square, Montparnasse, Tuileries, Ile de S. Louis, and an infinity of drawings, notes and sketches. The interior of the "Des Magots" café, with a gathering around a table, or a Japanese family drinking coffee, in the famous "Dupont" café. Cars parked in Saint Germain des Prés street; an interior of the metro in Chatelet; Pigalle, Place Blanch; Luxembourg gardens; the Arch of Saint Denis.

When I saw my drawings in the hotel room, I remembered that piece Moussorgsky's musical orchestrated by Ravel, "Pictures at an exhibition".

Almost every weekend we dedicated ourselves to getting to know the surroundings of Paris. We got to know Chartrés with its impressive cathedral, its famous stained glass windows and the charm of the city.

The monumentality of Versailles, with its impressive palace. Fontainebleau. La Malmeson and Chantilly.

I had taken my degree as a drawing teacher, and I obtained a "laisser passer" that allowed me free admission to all the museums and national monuments, and I gave Pepa a note as if she were my student and the pass was good for both of us. Little by little, we got to know Paris.

The obligatory visit to the Louvre Museum, in several days since it is impossible to know it at once. For a painter, all museums have something important, but I knew the Prado Museum very well, and the impression that Paris made on me as a city was not produced by the Louvre.

The Jeu de Paume Museum, where the impressionists of the late 19th century are. I knew the work of many of the painters, by more or less perfect reproductions. I had read a lot about Monet, Manet, Renoir, Toulouse Lautrec, Degas..., and frankly, I felt a bit disconcerted. I came across some paintings where the impressionist theory was unconvincing. The confusing color and often out of tune. I was used to painting in the Mediterranean light, with Sorolla as a lure, and I found a dying sun. Renoir's paintings are the least intellectual, due to their vulgar themes. The painter said: *I consider a finished nude when I feel like slapping it on the buttocks*. His characters do not belong to a certain social category, they are carnal beings contemplated by the painter. When his youth is fading, he takes refuge in the portrait of children, well-behaved and good-looking children. In them does not appear the spark of the urchins or the shamelessness of the people of the town.

Instead, I found it strong, determined, original, daring and raunchy. Toulouse Lautrec.

Degás, also conquered me. His lonely, sad life is reflected in his works. He, in a letter said: *I don't know how to play billiards, or court girls, or work in nature, or be pleasant in society*. His dusty studio with no wife or friends is littered with junk and ballet shoes. But yes, he liked to study the fleeting movement of people and transform the white canvases into a field of movement and depth. It captures the world of vertigo with the ballerina tying her slipper, women in ballet costumes, women waving, yawning, scratching their backs, stretching their stockings, tying their bows.

Representation scenes. Notes and sketches. Seeing these works I remembered some verses that say: *She dances dying, as around a reed / a flute in which Weber's sad wind plays*.

The Rodin Museum, with that pictorial sculpture, a match for our Benlliure. Shapes and tangible masses, tremulous, with a masterly imprint. Monumentality, recreation of the Renaissance "sfumato". Colossalism.

Notre-Dame Cathedral, a representative work of medieval art. The façade is extremely interesting and is adorned with masterful sculptures. Under the gallery of the Kings, the magnificent rose window is sold. Gargoyles and chimeras drain the top of the two towers. On one of our visits we met a group of tourists and upon hearing us speak Spanish, a priest asked us in a tone of disdain, "Are you Francoists or anti-Francoists?" No comment.

La Sainte Chapelle, an unlikely Gothic construction, which looks more like a glass chest, due to its splendid stained glass windows, topped by a delicately chiseled "La Flèche" needle at 75 meters high.

The Hotel des Invalides, crowned by the immense Mansart dome, below of which is the "Tombeau", the work of Visconti, where Napoleon rests.

Plaza de la Concordia, one of the most beautiful in the world. Its dimensions and harmony are the greatest pride of the capital. Some nights the magic of its fountains and its light effects are an unforgettable spectacle. In the center is the great obelisk of Louqsor.

The Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, the largest of its kind, is superbly sculpted, majestic and perfectly balanced. He emerges triumphant and colossal on the Chaillote hill and jealously guards the ashes of the Unknown Soldier, where his memory is perpetuated by the Eternal Flame, symbol of Honor and Sacrifice.

Place de Vendôme, an aristocratic and bourgeois neighborhood, nestled between Rue de St. Honoré and Rue Capucine, which was also designed by Mansart. This square takes its name from the column that is in its center, built with the bronze of 1200 Austerlitz cannons, decorated with 400 bas-reliefs that describe the Campaign of 1805.

The church of La Madeleine, with one of the best organs in the world. In its facade with columns, a beautiful classic front.

The Eiffel Tower, inseparable from the landscape of Paris, with its 300 metallic meters constitutes a vertical challenge. The elevator ride up to the restaurant located on the first floor and then up to the end point, lifts you up to a breathtaking view of the capital. You can go down a ladder, which we used on a certain occasion.

I continued drawing and taking notes incessantly. Pepa on the l'Alliance bulletin board saw that they were asking for Spanish classes for an eight-year-old boy. Pepa appeared at the requested address and it turned out that the child was the son of a Catalan sculptor, Joán Palá and his mother Dolores, who was from Chicago, a journalist and correspondent at the Brussels Exposition. The boy, Cristhy, spoke a "hodgepodge" and Pepa began to unravel the boy's linguistic skein. We are very intimate with the couple. We went with them to meetings and "parties" with their friends, who were naturally international: an Egyptian painter, two English, a German painter, an architect from Boston, a Greek couple and several Frenchmen. Pepa recited some poems, including the black lyric that I accompanied by tapping on the guitar or strumming it on other occasions. In one of these meetings, Pepa cooked a unique paella, without the proper container, replaced by a large pot, but the paella came out sensational.

Little by little, we became integrated into the artistic world. Adrián Miró also introduced us to several of his friends, José Galiana, a student from Zamora; Valencian painters that I already knew and who were at the College of Spain: Salvador Vitoria and Eusebio Sempere. I remember that one afternoon a party was prepared at said school. Women could not enter the rooms, but they could enter the

cafeteria lounge. There the dance was organized. As the budget for the party was very low, a record player and a lot of records were installed, and precisely, José Galiana acted as a "dj", there they played pasodobles, "rocks and rolls", "swings" and suddenly, the Hymn of Irrigation. The Spaniards realized it right away. Someone had put the hymn camouflaged between the records. Galiana flew into a rage. – "This is not how the revolution is made! It is done barefaced! If something happens, the only one affected will be me." The foreign attendees did not even notice and continued dancing to the beat of the anthem.

Around this time, Adrián and María Luisa Mompó were married. Since she could not reside at the Spanish School, they settled in the Nancy Hotel. There we would later meet Carlos Palacios and his wife Emilia. Another marriage from those dates was that of our friends Julia Juan and Tono Aracil, who came on their honeymoon and settled in our hotel.



*Paris – April 22, 1958*

*From left to right: Ramón Castañer, Julia Juan, Pepa Botella,  
María Luisa Mompó, Adrián Miro (Photo by Tono Aracil)*

They were fantastic days. The three couples went out to see the typical places of Paris. One afternoon, Adrián arranged for us a visit to the Paris Catacombs, which were the product of the urban expansion of the capital. It was thought in its day, that all the cemeteries that progress devastated, should deposit all the skeletons together in a suitable place and thus these catacombs were born, which were opened to the public, every first Friday of the month. His entrance was made through the Plaza de la Concordia. When buying the ticket they gave you a candle and the itinerary began there. A small, damp and dripping tunnel leads to an entrance where a sign reads: "*Stop pilgrim, here begins the Empire of Death.*" We entered a corridor, whose walls were decorated by hundreds of skulls, artistically placed, forming whimsical garlands with the tibias and the rest of the bones. The visit, in the end, is overwhelming and we left wanting Life. Directly opposite, there was a striptease room called "Tomato", and the three couples went there. The spicy show was hilarious, full of humor and well presented comics. Very French style. At the exit, our euphoria made us line up, side by side, and humming a Moorish march, in the style of our



Alcoy, we paraded through that narrow street "Des Champs Elysées". (It was April 22.)

The journalist Manolo Esteve Sabater sent us a note from Valencia announcing his trip to Paris, to deliver the novel he had written to a publishing house and which had given him hope of its publication. I also had to do a report on the Brussels Expo. Back in Paris, we stayed with him to make the trip to Brussels together, which the Aracil couple joined.

One day at ten at night we left from the North Station and arrived in Brussels at 7 in the morning. It was cold as hell. We got on a tram that took us to the fairgrounds.

There was the "Atomium", that symbolic monument with aluminum spheres, which became world famous.

We visited many pavilions, the English, the French, logically, the Spanish, and with great curiosity, the Russian. In the lobby of this one, they sold some toys, a reproduction of "Sputnik", the famous first space rocket. And among its stands, the one dedicated to electrical appliances caught our attention, a real technical display, with many televisions of different sizes, which reflected our image as we walked around the room. Women were curious to see the fur coats, but said it was "little glamorous." Then we went to a very large room where the Russian art exhibition of the moment was exhibited. Sculpture and painting. It was quite a disappointment. Plastically it was a retrograde art. Pure impressionism bathed in a pamphleteering political current, where art loses all its value. A painting depicting a German soldier beating up a pregnant Russian woman. A parade in Red Square in Moscow. A painting of great dimensions, enormous, where a group of athletic peasants and statuesque women carried the attributes of work: scythes, sickles, hoes, hammers, all sweetened with large socialist flags with the portrait of Lenin, which fluttered in a soft breeze. . A bronze sculpture, almost "chrysoelephantine", of a horny woman holding a bouquet of ears of wheat in her arms. The most propaganda. I had not seen Russian art, but what I saw at the Expo followed the established guidelines. It was art at the service of the party in power.

We were very tired and we looked for a place to eat. At the first restaurant we saw, we walked in very determined, sat down, but when we looked up and looked around, we realized that the atmosphere did not match our pockets. So, before the "maitre d'" approached, without exchanging a word, the five of us got up and went looking for a "self-service", where, by the way, we ate very well and at a reasonable price.

At seven in the evening, we were on the train that was taking us back to Paris. In the return compartment we met two Argentines: Nona and Sally. We had slept little, but the conversation was pleasant.

–What a pretty "skirt" you are wearing– Nona said, looking at Pepa, and pronouncing the "l", with that aspirated "sh" sound, so unique. We look at Pepa, to see where she was wearing her skirt. Until she explained to us that she was referring to the skirt she was wearing, and that I had painted her with some flowers, with glitter and sequins. When we arrived in Paris we were more dead than alive, but full of joy. The trip had been positive.

One day when I was painting in the street, a rather young person approached me. He told me that he really liked my style and that he would like to see more of my work. We agreed that he would come to the hotel the next day, at four in the afternoon. He arrived punctually for the appointment. He introduced himself giving me a card. Françoise Meyer.

Nothing less, he was the brother of the famous art critic, Israel Meyer. I showed him my works that excited him. He only seemed to disenchant Pepa's high-heeled shoes that were on the floor. "S'est vous marié?" he asked me. I guessed the whiff of the question and looked for a way to get him out of the room. I kindly told him that I had to pick up my wife at l'Alliance and he accompanied me. At the door we said goodbye, but when we came out, Meyer was there. He approached and asked Pepa if she would mind if I went to dinner with him and his brother Israel, to later see "The Magic Flute" at the Opera, and then "coucher". Pepa, astonished, her eyes wide, told him. – "You don't have to ask me, tell Ramón." I answered him flatly. No!. And the matter was terminated.

We thought about the possibility of exhibiting. We knew many galleries because we had visited many exhibitions. So I took two paintings and went out into the street. I visited many art rooms, and finally found the "Raymond Duncan" Gallery on the Rue du Seine. The owner was the brother of Isadora Duncan, the brilliant dancer. He was dressed as an old-fashioned Greek, a white cotton cloak, sandals with ribbons, and on his head a kind of ocher-colored serpentine that hung over the nape of his neck. His wife dressed in tanagra.

They really liked my work and we agreed on the date for the month of May, so I would have time to frame the works. The exhibition opened on May 2. The catalogue, simple "Galleries Raymond Duncan. 31 Rue de Seine–Paris VI. Exhibition –Ramón Castaner. From May 2 to May 14, 1958." The day of the presentation there was a small "vernissage". We invited a group of friends and the Spanish ambassador, Conde de Casa Rojas, who was interested in a work that represented a singular vision of Notre Dame. Naturally I selflessly sent the painting to the embassy and on May 24 we received a note:

*My dear friend,*

*Thank you very sincerely for sending your interpretation of Notre Dame in a truly amazing way.*

*I would like you to come and have lunch with me before going back to Alcoy.*

*For this, it is better that you call me so that we can combine the date.*

*It remains yours good*

*friend. signed and*

*initialed The Count of CasaRojas*

I called him on the phone and we agreed on the date, and Pepa and I, to the nines, showed up at the agreed time at the Spanish embassy. There were five of us at the table, the ambassador and his wife, Carlos Sentís, ABC correspondent, and the two of us. The friendly and relaxed conversation focused on my painting projects and our stay in Paris. They also commented on the Spanish film they were shooting, "Ambassadors in Hell", and how it had taken them a lot of time and work to find French soldier costumes for the extras. The film dealt with the hardships of a group of prisoners from the Blue Division in Russia and their return to Spain on the "Semíramis".

When we left, we commented on the excessive efficiency of the information services of the embassy, because Mr. Ambassador knew who we were, where we came from and who our parents were.

And since we were going, dressed to the nines and it was early, we dedicated ourselves to walking through those streets where the best of haute couture were found. : Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Coco Chanel.

There were several comments about my exhibition in some newspapers such as France Soir, Le Monde, and in "La Revista des Bellas Artes".

*Ramón Castaner is a young Spanish artist who exhibited for the premiere went to Paris and his facón de pendre la capitale est fort personelle. Des grands aplast très colorés ´s ´opposent á des pans d ´ombres mauve vibrants. Il évoque ainsi Notre Dame de París et les quartiers si pintoresque de Saint–Germain–des–Pres de facón directe, prenante forte émouvante.- HH*

Paris was surprising to us. We went to the Opera House, there we saw "The Magic Flute" by Mozart. Quite a show. The public properly dressed. Lights and "glamorous" atmosphere.

This performance was followed by "The Gallant Indies", by Rameau, an 18th century French opera, with impressive scenery. And later, the Russian ballet of the Bolchoi in Moscow with "Sleeping Beauty", by Tchaikovsky. The coliseum was full to the last rows, and the play was an unforgettable wonder. The dancers gradually won over the public and when the "pas de deux" came, the people stood up, seized with a delirium that we had never seen before, cheering and clapping. Unforgettable night. "Mon Dieu, que nuit!" –they said when leaving the Opera.

At the Opera Comique, we saw a French ballet interpreting the "Amor Brujo", of Fault. Fantastic!.

At the Champs-Élysées theater, an English ballet company staged several works by Gershwin: "Rhapsody in Blue", "Cuban Overture", a suit from "Porgi and Bess".

At the Chatelet theater, Irene López Heredia presented "La Celestina", by Rojas. She as Celestina, and María Dolores Pradera as Melibea. The theater was full of Spaniards. The final ovation from the public was tremendous.

At the Casino de Paris, we saw a variety show that had been on for a long time.

At the Olimpia, "music-hall" par excellence, we were able, one night, to get seats to see and hear Edit Piaf. A woman, already older, small, dressed in black, on a black stage, with hands and an expressive face and a voice that pierced the skin: "La Faulé", "La salle d'atente"..., and so on. , all the songs that the public applauded to that idol of the French song.

And as! We went to see Brigitte Bardot's films: "God Created Woman", "With the rope around her neck", "La verité", by Clouzot, one of the few films that Brigitte Bardot performed to demonstrate her dramatic vein to the moviegoer, although she did not For this reason, she moved away from the sexual image of an innocent and provocative girl. In the Paramount cinema, on Boulevard de Capucines, there was a poster of BB, totally naked, that covered the entire façade. About 50 m It was a lot of advertisement!.

We also saw the French premiere of "Las noches de Cabiria", by Julieta Massina, at the Madeleine cinema; and the film by Jaque Tattí, "Mon Oncle", and "Bonjour Tristesse", based on the work of Françoise Sagán, played by Deborah Kerr and David Niven.

We were trying to get to know everything, we were in Montmartre, the Place de Tertre, so typical, full of commercial painters who exhibit sweetened paintings from Paris for sale. Illustrators who create a portrait in a few minutes and others who cut out your silhouette with black cardboard. Dancers, traveling musicians who

They played the flute just like an African tamtan. Illusionists, card dealers, magicians who divined the future. A whole world of color, to which the multicolored awnings that shaded the coffee tables in the many bars contributed.

Then the Sacre-Coeur, part of the Parisian horizon, with its whiteness and its familiar silhouette. From its terraces you can discover, in a magnificent panorama, the confused immensity of the city.

We saw the streets that Utrillo painted, and the cafetuchos and typical restaurants: "Le Lapin agile", "Moulin de la Callette", "Auberge de la Boheme" and "Patachou".

We walked along the Rue de Pigalle and the "Place Blanche" and visited nightclubs and cabarets. One of these was called "Le Neant", when we bought the tickets, the ticket girl rang a bell and with a gloomy voice, announced –carrion enters. And to meet us came a gravedigger who accompanied us to the corresponding table. The tables were coffins and the lamps were made of bones: femurs, tibias and vertebrae. Naturally, the show was necrophilous.

We went out "pasmaitos".

At that time, Paris was the avant-garde, the "cavas" in Saint Germain des Prés were in fashion. Basements where they danced to "rock and roll". The frenetic rhythms, the live orchestras. The girls in their somersaults showed the petticoats, "can-can", which became fashionable. They danced without shoes, with an almost overwhelming vertigo. Then, on the way out, a glass of milk with rum in the cafes of the existentialists, "Deus Magots", "Dupont", "Fleurs", where Julieta Grecó sang and Sartre was discussed.

We visited the Pere Lachaise cemetery. Impressive sculpture of intertwined hands, dedicated to the victims of the concentration camps. We pass before the tombs of Largo Caballero; the painter from Alcoy Gisbert. Sara Bernhardt, in which, we were told, there was always a fresh flower.

General Charles de Gaulle is elected head of the government, and with full powers on May 31, 1958, when he prepares the new Constitution of the 5th Republic, Paris is altered. There are supporters and detractors, and the street reflects it. Riots and riots, demonstrations and charges by the gendarmes, who when it came to brandishing the batons, were unique. But the good thing about this was that everyone sang the Marseillaise and we didn't know if they were supporters or detractors.

The Spanish exiles were scared, because they feared that the General of Gaulle will send them on a train to Spain.

Despite everything, Pepa and I felt comfortable, and we thought about the possibility of staying in Paris.

Around these dates we visited the Drouant art gallery, in Fg. St-Honoré, where works by young contemporary painters were exhibited. Among them two German painters: Wessel and Schumacher, showed works of abstract painting with an impressive texture. The sands and lacquers were mixed with reflective paint and the works were mutants. They changed color depending on the viewing angle. That impressed me and left a seed in me that little by little grew and affected my pictorial style. I realized that without a theme, without an argument, just looking for a balance between mass and space, a synthesis of elements could be achieved, leaving only those that affected the form.

We were going through a good time, but sometimes destiny, that unknown being, interferes in our lives and without realizing it changes our course. Total, a simple telephone call altered our lives. My father called me and told me that my mother was unwell and that they were going to operate on her. I

He asked us to return to Alcoy. We packed our bags and got on the train that would take us to Spain.

On July 14, my mother underwent surgery for a herniated disc, but she would never recover from that operation. A single sister of my mother, Aunt Amanda, to remedy the situation, went to live with my parents. However, I was confident of his full recovery.

One afternoon the phone rang, and one of my mother's brothers told me that they were worried because my father had not come to eat. I called the factory and faced with the refusal, I called the places where I supposed it could be. When I couldn't find him, I called the factory again to tell them to go up to the apartment we had there, in case my father had gotten lost going over the accounts, and I begged them not to hang up the phone. Some cries of alarm, which I heard in the distance, told me that something had happened. A voice told me to come down quickly that my father had suffered an accident.

I was very scared and tried to calm Pepa down. When I got to the factory I was met with a horrific scene. Indeed, my father had been found on the floor. Supported by two men, he remained seated on the side of the box spring of his bed. He was unconscious, all stained with blood that flowed from his right temple. I feared the worst, and unconsciously my eyes searched for something I didn't want to admit. I called the Red Cross, and they sent an ambulance. When they took my father out of the room, I stayed behind to close the door, and I saw a metallic object shining between some folds of the cloth that was on the bed. It was my father's revolver. It was then that I understood what had happened. In my nervousness I took the gun and put it in my pants pocket, but instinctively, I left it where I had found it and ran out to get into the ambulance.

One of the nurses told me to look for D. Enrique Abad, who was a great surgeon and could take care of my father. They took him to the "San Jorge" sanatorium, and after the first cure, they admitted him, still unconscious, into a room.

I went to the doctor, and when he attended my father, he could not find an explanation for what happened. I didn't know how to react. Say what I saw, or shut up to avoid scandal. It was a real internal struggle and I opted for the former. The doctor told me –If the projectile has an exit, there is no legal problem; but if he remains inside, you will have no choice but to report him to the police station. An X-ray was taken, and the bullet was lodged in the brain.

I went to the police and with the judge we went down to the factory. They inspected everything, took the weapon, looked for the casing, which was not found until ten days later. My father left a letter saying that no one should be accused of his death.

At all times I was supported by my father-in-law. Pepa came to the sanatorium and we spent the night together. My father died at nine in the morning on November 20. I don't know why, that thing came to my mind: *"I will form together with my companions / who stand guard over the stars"*.

We went to my house to see my mother. She didn't know anything about what had happened, we told her it had been a work accident and we took her to our apartment in Fernán Caballero.

A nephew of my father, my cousin Luis Pascual, an excellent person, was in charge of making the obituaries, distributing them, and the mass. In the afternoon, he summoned me to his house and told me that the priest of the Parish of San Mauro and San Francisco, D. Vicente Torregrosa, was opposed to the mass and had prohibited him from sharing

of the burial notification. I went to talk to him, and he received me with terrifying coldness, arguing that the reason for my father's death was an option to suppress all religious services. After arguing, I told him: –Tomorrow is Sunday, I will accompany my father's hearse to the door of the church. If you go out to say a response, fine, and if not, I'll be there. He told me to go after mass for one.

At one o'clock, the funeral car that had picked up my father at the Oliver Hospital where the autopsy had been performed was at the door of my parents' house in front of the Glorieta. The street was filling up with people, friends and acquaintances. The obituaries had not been distributed, but my father's personality did not need them.

When the car started on its way to the church, without a cross, without clergy, like a secular burial, (the Banda Primitiva had offered to attend the accompaniment, which I made to give up to avoid violence.) I presided over the procession. accompanied by my father-in-law, my cousin Luis Pascual and Infantry Colonel D. Joaquín Pacheco, and behind a whole silent crowd. It was terribly cold, or at least it seemed so to me. When we arrived at the church, the Reverend D. José Ferrer came out, with a processional cross and an altar boy, said some prayers, and then began the farewell to mourning.

The next day he was buried in the niche where his beloved Enriqueta rested.

As I have said before, my mother knew that my father had died, but she did not know how. One day we had to tell her the truth about what happened and she said with great coldness: –“If your father had loved me, he would have had to shoot me first and then him”–. And he began to cry.

Life went on, but it took some time for it to normalize.

The situation that my father had left in the factory was very difficult. I was completely unaware of the address of the business. My father-in-law advised me – he always gave good advice – to find a lawyer, the only one he could advise me on. Said lawyer opened the will and told me that my father had divided his assets into three parts, of which two were for my mother and one for me.

My father left some debts and, therefore, some creditors. The lawyer called everyone to a meeting and proposed that I sign 12 bills of exchange, committing myself that they would be paid in one year. It was accepted. My father-in-law took over the factory and it was working for a year. There were stocks and material so you didn't have to buy anything. Just a year later, the debts were settled.

The lawyer told me that he would find someone to rent the building. He found a close friend of my father's, who, in order to take charge of the eleven workers in the factory, had to give him free of charge all the existing material, machinery, fixtures and everything that was useful in the business. My mother would receive a monthly rent of 2000 pts. (a derisory amount), without having the right to any increase and power, the tenant, to carry out works, reforms of the building as long as the structure of the building is not damaged.

Some time passed before circumstances forced me to believe that my father's will had been falsified.

To carry out the contract with the tenant, the lawyer drafted a document in which an option to purchase the building was implicit, for a small amount, and since my mother was already disabled, the notary went to her house to sign the statement document.

Chance wanted one day to require the tenant an increase in rent, to which he replied that he was not going to increase anything, if not to buy the building. Before his

emphatically, I went to notify the lawyer. He replied that if my mother had signed a purchase option, the tenant had the right to buy it. Since I had not signed, I was not willing to sell my share. Then he required the will and was furious when he realized that my father bequeathed everything in my favor, leaving my mother as usufructuary and since she had signed it, she could be tried for misappropriation. I was perplexed to see that my lawyer seemed to be more against than in favor of my interests. I had no choice but to look for a new lawyer in Valencia, D. Emilio Atart. To whom I explained the facts, the situation and the development of what happened. He took a lot of interest, sent a letter to Alcoy and the case was solved.

After that, I felt cheated and disappointed. And I still keep thinking, why was my will falsified? I have never understood why it came to that situation. 28 years later, after my mother died, the keys

to what was left of the buildings were returned to me. There were no windows, the ceilings were collapsing, everything was dilapidated, smashed, useless. Nothing remains of that business that my grandfather founded, of that company name, of which my father felt so proud. It was collapsing, grass for "squatters" and homeless people, and the saddest thing is that I am assisting, helplessly, in the collapse of the buildings.

Buildings that my grandfather rented for the manufacture of wool lees. The factory was a set of three buildings: The so-called "Terol" building, marked with number 7, on calle de la Riba, measuring 235 square meters, owned by Antonio Gisbert, and among its machinery was a 10-meter waterwheel diameter. Another building called "en Medio" or "Enguerinos", owned by María Miró Moltó, with number 9 of the "Cuartel del Sur", located in the heading of the "five teeth", which had 168 square meters. And a third building, owned by D<sup>a</sup>. Rosario and D.

Antonio Gosálbez, called the "Estambrera", of 149 square meters, marked with the no. 11 of the same game. In 1915, my grandfather created the company name, "Ramón Castañer Grau .SL" having Juan Silvestre as a partner. When my grandfather died in 1928, my father took over the business, and in 1942 he bought the three buildings.

I don't know if I will remember the process of making the lees.

My father bought the bales of cloth that were transported to the factory by trucks. They were weighed on a large scale and dragged by the workers, with large hooks, for better transport, to the basement of the Terol building.

Several women, around a sieve table, deposited the rag in large piles and they were cutting it and tearing off the sewn parts. With astonishing aim, they basketed it in large baskets, to classify the fabrics: wool, silk, corduroy, cotton, viscose or terry cloth. When the woolen buckets were full, they were transported to a kind of raft with water and sulfuric acid, to degrease them.

Afterwards, they took out the rags and wrung them out to transport them to the cylinders: machines that were used to wash and bleach them. These were placed on metal frames and introduced into the "torradora". The cloth, already toasted, was transported to the "devil": a machine with wooden brushes, with metal spikes, which crushed it, leaving it like a kind of cotton.

Then came the tinting. For example: –So many kilos of rooster-green fluff–. My father had a laboratory with pigments that he bought from "Unicolor" and prepared the proportions of the dye to serve the order.

There was a large copper plate boiler, and with pine wood, which was bought in large quantities, the powerful and cheerful fire was lit. When it was boiling, the pigment and the eraser were thrown away to dye it. How was it

impregnated with a small part of the sulfuric acid, bicarbonate of soda was poured, taking care to move quickly away, because the geysers that formed when boiling splashed a lot. Thus, the contents of the cauldron were removed and everything was dyed equally. In their slang, they had very funny colors: "Ugly Marys", which was a dirty maroon color; "glass green", "rooster green", "ash blue".

Afterwards, washing was carried out in another cylinder. The machine had some wheels that turned the lint around, while the water came out of a wooden "casupa" to wash it well. It was taken out in small metal baskets, called "loaves" and once drained it was taken to the extractor for drying. From here the wet lees came out and it had to be transported to the clotheslines to spread it and to dry in the open air. A worker was making furrows, to the right and backwards for its total airing.

Then it was introduced into large burlap sacks, which would be approximately 1.65 high, and would hold between sixty or seventy kilos, and it was transferred to a porch of the building for later billing.

The non-bagged lees was taken to another unit and piled up waiting for its packaging. How many times have we played as children, my friends and I, to roll around in those piles. The manager felt very bad, because the fluff curled and lost all its freshness. In the summer months we would come out of those piles that looked like Martians, the dust stuck to the sweat and sometimes we were green, other times blue, and other times maroon.

Then the trucks would come, from "Baradello" transport and they carried the gender to your destination.

My memories in the factory are linked to the monotonous noise of the hydraulic wheel, or to the "cracking" of the nailed joints of the belts that moved the wheels of the busbars.

Someone once told me that when my father was a child, he was about six years old, he fell into the waterwheel pit. At his screams, they diverted the water and stopped the wheel, they took the child out and he was unharmed. My grandparents considered the fact almost miraculous, it was March 18, the day of San Gabriel and on the facade of the "Enguerinos" building they placed some tiles of the saint at the time of the Annunciation, 12 tiles, 20 x 20 cm. When my father died I removed the tiles and moved them to Agres's house. I also remember that there were other tiles

on top of the entrance gate of the "Terol" building. They represented angels carrying the Virgen del Pilar. I don't know why the image of the Virgen del Pilar was represented in many factories on the Molinar River. In the 1936 war, they were whitewashed and in 1959 when the buildings were rented they disappeared from their site.

And the image of a modernist lithograph that my father had framed on the wall of his office, which represented the ladder of life, is still very much alive in me. On the first steps there was a child in diapers, higher up playing with a hoop, then dressed for his first communion, the wedding, the children and so on, up to the upper landing where a man dressed in gray greeted by taking off his hat.

Then came the descending staircase, the grandchildren, the old man sitting with a cane, and the death.

When I was very young, I asked my father why the man on the landing took off his hat. My father told me –He has turned 50!–. When my father died he was 58 years old and the descent began. I was 29 years old, and I was halfway up the ladder.



## CHAPTER VI

*Creation is mystery, a lot of work  
and a great effort. But a lot of  
mystery. I'm not a tormented creator,  
I'm a happy guy.*

*A.Piazzolla*



Little by little, our life became normal, I started to paint again and I continued classes at the Institute of Media Education.

One day Juan Rufino called. He wanted to talk to us about a project to represent a sacramental car, on the occasion of the commemoration of the diamond jubilee, of the Spanish Nocturnal Adoration. We grew enthusiastic, and without realizing it, the rehearsals of Calderón de la Barca's "Matrimonial Lawsuit of the Body and Soul" began.

Logically, all those who made up the long repertoire were people from Alcoy and the roles were shared: the Corps, José Maíquez; the Soul, Pepa Botella, Death, Rosario Guillén; Sin, Rafael Insa; Understanding, Enrique Soler; Will, Amparo Valor, Life, M<sup>a</sup>Rosa Satorre; and thus up to 82 characters that formed the corps de ballet and symbolic elements, clergy, beggars and court of miracles.

I was in charge of the set and design of all the costumes. I measured the stage of the Calderón theater, to match the scale drawings of the different parts of the set. Floor, large black and white tiles, which I painted on canvas. In the background, the appliqué of a wooden staircase, covered with black cloth, which led to the upper floor, where there was an irregular cut-out door that symbolized heaven.

I covered the entire stage in black, with white tarlatan sconces. At the sides of the stage, two frames, to the right and left, five meters high, painted with the signs of the zodiac. On the stalls, two forillos destined to the rooms of Death, and of Sin. The first, covered with black and purple gauze, and a metal coffin from the modernist period. And the second, predominantly leaden yellow and black colors, which symbolize the colors of hypocrisy. For the character of Alma, complete wedding outfit. The Body, leggings and leaves symbolizing nudity, and later, scarlet cape and tinsel crown, when the Senses incorporate him into life.

The sketches I made for each character bore the symbol of what they represented: Understanding, with a gray tunic and a black screw painted. The Will, with a white tunic, a weather vane and red socks. La Hermosura, dressed in flowers, symbolizing spring. The elements: Fire, Air, Earth and Water, ballet-type figurines, with allegorical paintings of their symbol. And the five senses, with colors, elements and significant symbols of each one.

The Auto Sacramental was represented on October 13, 1959 with the collaboration of the Alcoyana Polyphonic Choir, the Children's Choir and the Santa María Parish Choir. It was a memorable night.

Around this time I got my driver's license. My father-in-law bought a gray 1939 Opel, enormously elongated headlights above the fenders, leather upholstery, running board, large trunk, and spare wheel. Half the family learned to drive in that car. It seemed to me that I was driving a bus. It was tall, with a huge steering wheel that was very heavy to drive and a loud trumpet horn. I bought a book to learn the theory and I started driving practice with Ángel Martí, a friend of my father-in-law. We would go out on Saturday afternoons, we would go to Barchell, Polop and we almost reached Bañeres. I came home bathed in sweat, it seemed very difficult for me to control that machine, it was

as if the car insisted on dominating me. Until the day came when I myself realized that I had mastered the car. And the exam arrived at the Industry Delegation. In writing I had no problems, and the practical exams were held at the "Collao". I was the last to examine myself. My brother-in-law Rafael was with me, and when I had to do the exercise, called the "eights", a zigzag through some red cones, Rafael, who was not very tall, got behind the car and was putting the cones upright. that I knocked down Then the exercises of the exam. When I finished, the delegate, Mr. Serafín Sánchez, told me: "Castañer, with the brushes, you will do very well, but with this, not so much. Stop by within 15 days to pick up the card". It was already approved.



*Monterrey-Alcoy. From left to right: Camilo Bito and Mrs., Tomás Ferrándiz and Estrella, Ramón Castañer and Pepa, Antonio Revert and Lolín, Luis Sorolla and Marita, Tono Aracil and Julia, Alfonso Saura and Fina.*

We tried to support and participate in all cultural events. I was named a member of the "Andrés Sempere" Institute of Culture in Alcoy. We were subscribers to "Ciudad", members of the "Cine Club Pax", –how well the Rvd. D. José Ferrer– (for the first program I made a drawing.)

Followers of the Alcoyana Symphony Orchestra. Pepa interpreted the narrative part of the story Peter and the Wolf by Prokofiev, directed by the orchestra D. Rafael Casasempere. First at the Calderón de Alcoy theater and later at the Principal in Alicante.

We supported the "Cazuela" and attended all its performances, from its first staging with "María Antonieta" by Calvo Sotelo, and Pilar Olcina as the lead actress, under the direction of Mario Silvestre. We were also at the famous performance of "Cargamento de Sueños" by Alfonso Sastre, specially invited to the premiere. At the end of the work, a colloquium was organized, which exploded like a bomb, when Rafael Casasempere told Sastre: "You. who is the most censored author in Spain, tell us about censorship". The colloquium turned into a political issue and a scuffle broke out, which ended in an imposing ruckus. At a summer festival, the company led by Maritza Caballero and Anastasio Alemán staged "El Jardín de Falerina" in the Plaza Mayor, with such success that they returned in December with the play "Three hats of cup" by Mihura, at the Teatro

Circus and, also on this occasion, a scandal was organized as part of the attendees considered that the play was immoral and left the room during the performance, while others applauded the baffled actors.

Our studio in Fernán Caballero was the meeting place for friends.

How many nights have we dined in the warmth of the fireplace with the couples, Revert, Aracil, Sorolla and Revero.

How many nights from Julio's bar (San Roque breakfasts), where we lived We would go up "fried pancakes" to accompany the chocolate for everyone.

Our house was always open to friendship. There, we edited a radio script that Pepa had written, about the April festivities, with Mario Silvestre, Rafael Insa, María Rosa Satorre, Enrique Soler, Rosario Guillén and my musical montage.

There were Nuria Espert, Sofía Noel, the film director José Lluich, the Granada poet Rafael Guillén. The journalists and friends from Alcoya, Rafael Coloma, José Bito, and how many coffees we have had with Rafael Casasempere, the notaries Juan Manzano and José Antonio Cortázar, and the endearing couple Pepe Gisbert and Amparo Aguilar.

There we organized a night to present ourselves dressed as pimps from Madrid, the men with caps and handkerchiefs and shawls from Manila and flowers, the women, to attend the representation of the zarzuela "La Verbena de la Paloma" at the "Monterrey", and with much This is how we entered humor, before the public's expectation: Lolín Romá and Antonio Revert, Fina Llácer and Alfonso Saura, Julia Juan and Antonio Aracil, Tomás Ferrándiz and Estrella, Luis Sorolla and Marita, Bito and Mrs. and Pepa and me.

How far those Alcoyan summers full of restlessness and enthusiasm have remained. Our generation in Alcoy, silently, knew how to pitch in.

The director of the Institute, D. Eduardo Nagore, called me one day to tell me that they were going to set up a chapel and that they had a small budget for its construction. We agreed on a painting for the front and for me to take care of the decoration, an altar and chandeliers.

It occurred to me to paint a Christ, and I did the work. On a 2 m high wooden cross, lined with zinc, I painted the Christ, who kept the deceased color of dead flesh, blue, white and grey, without blood, without torment. Waiting with open arms for the last man on earth to arrive, and then transfigure, in a wide, ecumenical and redemptive embrace, the salvific fact of his death.

Rafael Coloma, in one of his "Stained glass windows in the sun", in the newspaper "Ciudad", said: *"Castañer has painted a Christ that invites us to remain silent; that silence that they have every Good Friday, which reveals that Christ really expired on the Cross; that Christ is still dead on the cross; waiting for the affirmative answer to the plea <forgive them because they don't know what they are doing>.*

premonitory text. Everything was ready for the inauguration. But there is always something, or someone who does not agree that everything that is not, as he conceives it, is a collusion. And it exploded like a bomb! A professor from the Institute sent a letter to the director of the center, denouncing the immorality of the Christ, and communicating that he had written a note to the archbishopric of Valencia to prohibit its exhibition to the public.



*Ramón Castañer painting the Christ. - 1959*

I took some photos of the Christ, so that they could see in the archbishopric what the painting was like, and Pepa and I went to Valencia. We were received by Mr. Guillermo Hijarrubia. – *oh! Are you from the Christ?* – he said. – *We received a note and the Archbishop warned: Don't let the painting of that Christ escape us!* –. We showed him the photos, he did not see anything immoral in the work, to such an extent that he did not trust that the Christ in the photos was the one who had been denounced. He urged me to bring him the original painting and when I commented on the impossibility due to its large size, he commented ironically: *If you, with your inspiration, cover that "bag of grapes" that Christ wears, I will authorize the blessing.* Upon hearing that, I knew that they were not judging the work, but rather the stinginess of the complaint and wanting to avoid scandal. Pepa came out in defense of my work, and he coldly replied: *Madam!, you are playing the role of Eva.* We returned to Alcoy, I took the painting down and took it home. I repeated the zinc-lined wooden cross. But this time, that professor, so beatifically bastard, would not tell me that the new Christ was immoral. I painted a bleeding figure, with a large crown of brambles, and a burlap that covered him from the chest to the knees, nails and spear. It cost me money out of my pocket, because since the work was included in a state budget, the expenses could not be repeated. Nagore commented that he liked the first Christ better, and I replied: "Me too, and that's why I have him in my house."

This Christ was hung and blessed, I was not at the inauguration ceremony of the chapel. Many years later, when Roberto García was director of the Industrial School, he told me that in the basement of the school, they had found a Christ signed by me, and they wanted me to preside over the assembly hall. But was it carried out?

I, with my father-in-law's car, had become the driver who took the family up and down from Alcoy to Agres and from Agres to Alcoy. But we were excited to have our own means of transportation, and of course, I was not seduced by the idea of a motorcycle. So, with our first savings we went to Valencia, to the Iso house, and we bought an "Isseta". The stroller was cute.

Light blue color, registration "A-27985. It had a round shape and people called it "the egg". Convertible and two seats, the front door, with a steering wheel elbow, which articulated when opened. Four gears and reverse, two cylinders and one spark plug, turbine cooling and mixed fuel: oil and gasoline. With that stroller, Pepa and I traveled half the world. Trips to Barcelona, several to Santander, Soria and in the summer of 1960, Alcoy-Roma, passing through Barcelona and Perpignan, where we bought a tent, two air mattresses and two sleeping bags. Continuing our journey through the campsites of Marseille, Nice, Monaco, Ventimiglia, Pisa, Florence and Rome.

At that time, life in a tent offered no danger. Many times we would mount it where it got dark and the funny thing is that we slept peacefully. But sometimes we had surprises. One night, it was quite late, and we pitched our tent near a hedge for shelter.

When we were half asleep, a fast train of those with a coal locomotive passed by with all its roar. We thought it was the end of the world, we hugged each other and when the train moved away we realized that the track was behind the hedge.

The Pisa campsite was sensational. It was on a fashionable beach near the capital, very well set up, with first class services, a restaurant and an exchange bank. Our stay in Pisa was just passing through, but we did not stop visiting its three monuments that form a harmonious whole. The cathedral and to the east, but separated from it, the inexplicable Tower of Pisa, majestic and enigmatic and in front of the cathedral's façade, the baptistery with its four doors with sculptural decoration.

We had made very good use of the Isseta space. Inexplicably, in addition to our luggage, we carried the tent we had bought, a folding table with two seats, a basket with everything necessary to organize meals, a guitar and, of course, the box of paints, a large pad and a pile of cardboard. At the beginning of the trip I already began to take notes, and to paint landscapes, urban views and everything that impressed me.



*Campsite Florence*



*Pepa and Ramon. Colosseum Rome.*

To get to Florence we had to cross the Bracco, from Rapallo to La Spezia. Our poor Isseta limped to climb the six passes at 1000 m altitude and go down again to sea level, it seemed to us that we were helping her, propelling her from within, with a forward sway. It was swelteringly hot and many cars had to stop to cool their engines. Everyone was stunned to see our stroller go by, with a "tortured" but constant march.

The Florence campsite was located in Viale-Michelangelo, at the foot of the colossal statue of David, by Michelangelo. We stayed for a long time, since the city interested us, and we traveled without hotel obligations or ticket commitments, our only problem was to make it last as long as possible, the



money that we had, and we already took care of that. We visited the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, built in the 14th–15th century, with an immense dome, more than 45 m in diameter, with its famous Gate of Paradise, by Ghiberti, who had won the competition to build the bronze paintings. gold and made an innovation, conceiving those paintings, dilated and deep. The Pitti Palace, by Brunelleschi with its beautiful garden. And painting by Titian, Rembrandt, Veronese, Andrea del Sarto, Rubens, Van Dyck. The Basilica of S. Lorenzo, where there are the tombs of the Medicis with statues by Michelangelo. The Santa Croce, with paintings by Giotto.

We dedicated a day to each place, we had breakfast in the store, and we collected the belongings that we kept, with no more security than a zipper, but we never lacked for anything. We left early and returned at night.

The visit to the "Uffizi Gallery" with works by Paolo Uccello, Pedro de la Francesca. "The Birth of Venus", by Botticelli; "the Coronation of the Virgin", by fray Angélico; The "Adoration of the Magi" by Leonardo de Vinci..

Another day we dedicated to the convent of San Marcos to see the painting of Fray Angélico, and we took turns visiting squares and markets and buying Florentine crafts. "The Ponte Vecchio" over the Arno and the stalls with scandalously commercialized "souvenirs", and the typical neighborhoods, and the meals in the famous "pasta" houses.

We visited surrounding villages, such as Fiesole, with its magnificent Roman theater, and a Renaissance convent where Renato Castellani's "Romeo and Juliet" was filmed in 1945, with Laurence Harvey and Susan Shentall.

Then we went to Rome, to the EUR campsite, located in the same place where Mussolini, in the 1930s, built a large stadium and sports recreation fields.

But our way there was not so easy. It was getting dark and there was a summer mist, we glimpsed in the distance a column of smoke reddened by the fire of some foundry, which resembled the camping of some Roman legions in the night rest. We got lost several times, and we asked: "Prego, camping EUR?" And they answered us "Avanti!". But they repeated "avanti" to us so many times that I thought we were already close to Naples. But finally, we arrived.

It is impressive, in Rome, the contact with the remains of the Old Empire. The Forum of Rome, which stretches between the Capitol Hill and early Rome. Here were built in remote times: The temple of Jano, that of Vesta, the palace of the Curia, the temples of Julio, Concordia, Vespasiano, Antonino and Faustina, the tribunes or "rostra", and the monumental triumphal arches of the Via sacral. The whole city breathes the air, where perhaps, if you strain your ears, you can still hear the rumble of the drums in the parade of the Roman legions on the Appian Way. Another splendid example of Roman architecture is the "Colosseum", the Flavian amphitheatre, which was built at the end of the first century of the Christian era. Its impressive structure is that of two buildings, joined by the center that give it an oval shape. The famous baths, a regular meeting place for the Romans, intended for baths, but later used for gymnastic exercises. The imposing ruins of the baths of "Caracalla" and those of "Diocleciano", which were restored by Michelangelo, were transformed into the church of Santa María de los Ángeles.

On our visit to St. Peter's Square, we were amazed by the grandeur of the dome of the Vatican Basilica and Bernini's Colonnade, which forms a semicircle, like two welcoming arms. In the center the Obelisk of Doménico Fontana.

Once inside, and placed under the immense Michelangelesque dome, we no longer cared about the rich marbles, nor the lavish decoration. We admire the fantastic Baldachin by Bernini, supported by four spiral-shaped columns, built over the tomb of Saint Peter and in one of the side chapels the harmonious ensemble of the Pietà, by Michelangelo, with the Virgin holding the body in her arms. dead of Christ A veil of sadness covers their beautiful bodies.

We tried to alternate visits to museums with walks around the city and we went for a walk along the Corso, which is the main and most central street in the city. We wanted to see the Trevi Fountain. Made in the 18th century, it represents the triumph of Neptune, majestic and powerful, among capricious waterfalls. There, as tradition requires, we dropped our coins and drank its water, but the request to return to the place has not been fulfilled. Continuing our walk, we arrive at the Spanish Steps and sit down on the monumental steps that lead to the church of the Santísima Trinidad dei Monti.

In all our trips, language difficulties, when we wanted to buy something and the object or thing we were looking for was not in our sight, we made up for it with expressive mimicry or drawing myself, whatever we wanted.

On one occasion I wanted a capo, so I asked the seller for a sheet, I drew a guitar and the piece I was looking for. Fixed.

But sometimes the problem of understanding was magnified. This happened to us precisely at the Triton fountain, in that square Isseta stopped me, organizing a traffic jam of fear. Everyone was yelling at me and I didn't know what to do.

Candle! Office, candle! they said gesturing. But we didn't understand anything. We thought they were sending us to the "Candela office", and we insisted –ofichina, no, Isso house–. But finally, we understood that the candle was a candle and the office was a garage, and we headed for via Cavour, where the Isso house was. Everything was solved, but we had an impressive anger. When we got to the campsite, I guess to calm our nerves, Pepa came up with the idea of frying peppers in our little "camping gas" canister. Luckily, we resolved things with good humor.

The next day, calmer now, we set out on via del Tritone towards the Barberini Palace to see his works, and above all "la Fornarina", by Raphael, who we knew was there. But on visits you are always surprised, and for us it was, the fantastic fresco on the vault that represents "The Triumph of Divine Providence", by Pietro da Cortona, a painter of whom we did not know any work. Here a great artist is shown due to the composition of the work and the spatial solutions represented. Our next visit was to the Sistine Chapel, to admire the work of

Michelangelo. Before Michelangelo painted his frescoes, other painters had decorated spaces in the chapel with different frescoes. Thus, Pinturicchio, made several biblical scenes. Botticelli, with his work "The Story of Moses" and "The Temptations of Christ". Roselli, "El Paso del Mar", and the Chirladayo, "The Call of the Apostles".

In 1508, Pope Julius II, commissioned Michelangelo, then 33 years old, to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Michelangelo had to study the preparation of fresco painting, in which he had no practice. He refused to have help, Bramante, built him a scaffold, which he refused, and built his own scaffolding. He looked for models, made sketches, studied anatomy and when he was fully prepared, the work began. Which ended in 1512.

The central part of the roof is flat and the sides form arches with vaults. In the flat part it distributes the spaces with the themes of the creation of the Universe.

The one dedicated to the Creation of Man is so magnificent that this work alone would have been enough to give its author immortality. In the lateral triangular spaces, he composes figures of Prophets and Sibyls that are the largest. They are all seated, accompanied by angels. We, lying on the pews in the chapel, to better contemplate the work on the ceiling, lost track of time.

But where Michelangelo manifests himself as a brilliant artist, it was in the Universal Judgment that occupies the front part of the chapel. In this mural he represents the scene, from the "Dies Irae", from the "Divine Comedy". He was 50 years old when he began this work in 1535 and finished it six years later in 1541.

The presentiment of the Resurrection of the Flesh, in a glorious existence, frames the figure of Christ, who occupies the center of the work in the Last Judgment. There is a surrounding atmosphere of naked living beings, carried away by love and hate, by passion and pain, distributed on perpendicular and oblique planes, forming radii on the circumference of the baroque whirlpool. Color is something secondary, which conforms to the plastic volumes, between masses, spaces and profiles.

Only this work, without more, deserves a visit to Italy. Then nothing.

Once we believed that our objective was covered, almost two months after our departure, we decided to return to Alcoy. When we got to the door of our home, we gave the stroller a kiss. He had behaved very well.

At the beginning of 1959, a commission from the Church of El Salvador, in Cocentaina, contacted me to propose the creation of a mural in the communion chapel. I got excited and started working on some sketches related to the theme of the "Holy Supper" and composing the scene some offering angels. Plastic art was very modern: refinement of lines and masses, as well as color.

The representation is serene. At the bottom, a table with a white tablecloth that covers it completely. The neat white of the tablecloth is furrowed by a slight insinuation with the projection of the shadow of the scaffolding. Christ is represented with a simple chalice in his left hand and blessing with his right. His physiognomy is Semitic, with a beard and without a mustache, and his figure divides the horizontal of the table in two. To his right five apostles remain standing, and Saint John appears kneeling, altering the horizontality of the group. And to his left, the other six apostles, among whom, the figure of Judas, red-haired, "rubicundus erat Judex", in a corner, in front of the table, leaning slightly on it, turning his back on the group, as if initiating the escape.

In the part dedicated to the heavens, some clouds that resemble scenes, on which angels lean, with bows to the "meninas velazqueñas", close the 80 square meter complex. The nimbus that appear behind the heads are square, gilded with gold leaf, they form a pleasant geometric plane with a slight oscillation.

Rafael Camps, decorator painter from Cocentaina, gilded frames, capitals, and moldings. I told him about our idea of establishing our residence in Valencia and he offered me a flat for rent that he had on Burriana street.

Meanwhile I was preparing an exhibition about my work done in Paris, for the gallery "La Pinacoteca" in Barcelona. It also included two portraits, two works from the town of Altea and a painting entitled "Joan of Arc at the stake", and another, based on a poem by Joan Valls, "Ángel per a una doncella boja", in

the one in which I started a path, of texture and plastic, towards abstraction. In total 30 works. The prologue to the exhibition catalog was written by José Antonio García de Cortázar.



*Mural Church El Salvador - Cocentaina. 1960, 82 m2*

In 1960 I prepared an exhibition for the "Sur" gallery in Santander, through the mediation of Minuca Simón, who was from Santander, married to Teodulio Rejero, friends of ours in Alcoy. His father, D. José Simón Cabargas was an art critic and the director of the Museum of Fine Arts and who wrote the presentation of my catalogue.

The gallery was run by Manuel Arce, a writer and poet, a well-known person in the Santander art world. It was thought, for the day of the inauguration, that Pepa would interpret some poems in the room, and in this way unite painting and poetry. The success was extraordinary. All the press covered the exhibition and Pepa's recital. Comments came from Alejandro Gago, in "Alert"; Julio Poo, in "El Diario Montañés"; Simón Cabargas, in "The Voice of Cantabria". Lupe, on Radio Santander, who in the interview with Pepa, asked her:

"What do you think of your husband when you see him with the brush in his hand? That of painting, it is understood!

There was an extraordinary atmosphere. We met José Agudo, poet and writer; Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde, poet, writer and art commentator. We were among friends, who supported us at all times. We held several gatherings where conversation, painting and poetry were twinned. We extended our stay. And since there were several portraits among the exhibited work, I carried out some commissions: that of a French lady, who took her 1.50 x 1 m portrait, with fresh paint. From the Zen family, some Belgians who lived in Barreda, I painted the lady and her two children. To a daughter of Manuel Arce. I sold almost the entire exhibition, and the Museum of Fine Arts acquired the work "El Ángel Presentido"

Given Pepa's success on the opening night, they prepared her presentation at the Ateneo. The night of the recital, the auditorium was packed. Manuel Arce presented the first part "Pepa de Castañer, intermediate voice of poetry", with poems by Lorca, Alfonsina Storni, Alberti, and José Hierro. And the second part was presented by Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde with a "Talk about black lyrics", and Pepa, whom I accompanied with a bongo, recited poems by Luis Cané, Emilio Ballagas, José Méndez Herrera, Ignacio Villa, Nicolás Guillén, L. Palés Matos and José Zacarías Tallet. The truth is that Pepa was splendid. He captivated the audience that gave him long and warm applause. They were unforgettable days.

We had contacted Manuel Jordá, a former German teacher, in our high school days, and his wife, Nati Palacios, a charming person. They were at the exhibition and the recital and offered us their house, with good and sincere friendship. And we were with them, when we returned in August for a performance by Pepa, at the Menéndez Pelayo International University, in the Paraninfo de las Llamas, in some courses given by Pepe Hierro.

I continued in Alcoy during the 1961-62 academic year teaching drawing classes in Fine Arts. But at the end of 1961, the appointment, by the Mayor, of a new teacher appeared in the newspaper "Ciudad". The person seemed fine to me, but what I could not admit is that I found out about the incident through the newspaper, without having been consulted. I spoke with Enrique Oltra, we discussed, and this was the trigger for our move to Valencia. We already had the apartment on Burriana street that we had rented from Rafael Camps. And on March 19, 1962, Pepa's saint's day, la Isseta, took us to Valencia. It rained to seas, so much so, that they had to advance the "cremà" of almost all the faults.

Once settled, the most urgent thing was to find a job, some drawing classes at any school. Our good friend, the priest D. Juan Blanquer, to whom a great friendship united us from Alcoy, told me that the branch of the Instituto S. Vicente Ferrer was about to be inaugurated, and that I would be in charge of the drawing groups. Meanwhile, we visited several schools and at the Marianistas they gave me several high school courses where there was drawing. There I met Vicente Barreira, who also taught drawing. Soon after, the Marianist nuns called me to take charge of some courses.

Vicente Barreira set up a Drawing and Decoration academy and asked me if I would take charge of the Art History subject. In this academy, the part dedicated to decoration was very important and had a large number of students, and therefore we were several teachers: Cabedo Torrens, explained perspectives, Vicente Barreira, drawing and painting, Juan Garcés, linear drawing and mathematics, Mari Ángeles Pascual, crafts and ornamentation and me, art history and set design.

There was a good atmosphere, and a large number of students and naturally a lot of "believe me". I studied Art History, bought books and treatises. I worked a lot on a subject that I had not used since the San Carlos courses, and I tried to establish myself in the expositions of the topics. I spent many hours studying the characteristics of the styles, from prehistoric times to the 20th century. I made sketches and models and to facilitate their work I drew on the blackboard the various characteristics of the monuments: section of a pyramid, Assyrian winged bulls, construction of the Doric column, entasis or curvature, capital, column and Ionic volute, Corinthian capital, arches, bases, moldings, supporting and supported elements... In such a way I came to dominate the subject, that I thought of presenting myself for oppositions to the chair of Art History, but these were never called.

In 1963, branch number 9, of the San Vicente Ferrer Institute, was inaugurated in the Virgen de los Desamparados neighborhood, governed by the parish priest of Nuestras Señora de Fátima, with drawing sections in day and night courses. This allowed me to do without classes at the two Marianist schools.

Around this time, my good friend, the musician Paco Llácer, an official at the Provincial Institute of Hygiene in Valencia, told me that D. Justiniano Pérez, a doctor at the aforementioned center, wanted to talk to me. I introduced myself one morning, and he told me that he had thought of doing some murals, on two large walls in the lobby. And he proposed as a subject the stay in Valencia of Ramón y Cajal, on the occasion of the cholera that occurred in the 19th century. I made two large sketches, which I still have framed. One represents the collection of choleric dead in the Torres de Serrano, with coffins in carts. And the other, to Ramón y Cajal, with several doctors, in the makeshift hospital of La Lonja, with patients and nuns of charity. He thought my work was great. But he had to present them, for approval, at the next meeting. What D. Justiniano did not suspect was that each delegate came to the meeting with different sketches to cover the project. Paco Llácer told me later that such a ruckus was organized that the idea had to be abandoned.

Meanwhile, at home I was completely dedicated to abstract painting. I had set aside all figural representation, ending up with a work that I still have, "Ángel per a una doncella boja", which had already been featured in the exhibition at the "Pinacoteca" in Barcelona. On a texture, almost a wall, I painted a very simplified angel, in profile. A profile, reminiscent of Egyptian figures from the time of Amenhotep IV. Holding an unlit lamp in my hand, in which I wanted to represent the lack of light in the mind of the maiden that the angel protects, and at the same time, refer to the parable of the "foolish and prudent virgins".

As I mentioned before, the abstract works that I saw in Paris left their mark on me and I tried to reflect on the canvases a simplification of the themes, which logically went hand in hand with the application of new textures. I had found a material that satisfied me, and that I had achieved, with a mixture of varnishes, sand, tropical roots and pigments, diluted over the fire, which gave a result of ceramic material, glossy and glossy. Very pleasant to the eye and to the touch.



*"Abstraction", 1961; 100 x 81cm*

In my home studio I had collected a good number of canvases with abstract painting. At that time, I met Ismael, manager of the Estil Gallery, who saw my work and was interested in holding an exhibition in his gallery. I framed the works with "baguette", and we prepared the catalogue, in which my friend, the musician Paco Llácer, wrote the presentation and, in addition, we organized a series of acts for said exhibition. This was inaugurated on March 5, 1963. The poet, Valencia Award winner, José María Pérez Martín, made the presentation of the event. Many people attended, press and radio. There was a lot of expectation because it was the first exhibition of non-figurative art, which was held in a private gallery. During the time that the exhibition lasted, we carried out three cultural events. On Saturday, March 9, a "Talk-Recital", with the commentary of Francisco Llácer Pla, on "The musical in the work of CASTAÑER" and the music recital was made up of:

SONATINA 1960

(Dedicated to R. Castañer)  
Piano solo: Jesus Gluch

Two love affairs a)

Illusions perdidas (Spanish text) b) Idil-li  
(Valencian text)

Three lieder and a couplet I

Yesterday...

II The tide III

My idylls IV

Copilla

Soprano. Emilia Munoz

Piano: Jesus Gluch

On March 12, Pepa gave a poetry recital at the exhibition. The presentation was made by José María Pérez Martín. The first part dedicated to Lorca, Gerardo Diego, Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, Miguel Hernández, Manuel Arce, Blas de Otero and José Hierro. And the second part dedicated to the black lyric, accompanied by me, with a bongo

On Friday, March 15, the staged reading of the dramatic work by Juan Alfonso Gil Albornos was offered by the group of voices of "La Voz de Levante" and the Chamber Theater of Valencia.

WIRED!

The theme of this drama puts human problems on stage in an anecdote full of realism, finding behind them a symbolic background.

Wire fences! It is an avant-garde work that rescues a ray of hope from the mire.

#### DISTRIBUTION

JOHNAL	Vicente Cruañes
USHER	Vincent Zanon
THEODOR	Frederick Calvillo
DAVID	Pablo Gomez
STOLZ	salvador room
FRAU	Jose Villanueva
ERIKA	Pepa de Castañer
SOPHIA	Carmen Viguer
RAQUEL	Maria Antonia Lopez
NIGRA	Elsa Fields
SOLDIER	Alejandro Colubí
KIND	Jose Antonio Gomis

NARRATOR: José Luis Márquez

DIRECTOR. J.F. Tamarit

Like other years, the "Painting Salon Autumn Award" was convened by the Ateneo Mercantil de Valencia, in its ninth call. When I read the bases, I was painting a picture of a social theme, "La Mina", and it seemed appropriate to present it to the prize. I don't remember the measurements well, but it must have been between 2 x 1.45 m. Three male figures, almost life size. The miner on the right, in profile, with an air hammer; another with a pick and in the center, a third bent over, collecting the coal in a basket. That material that I used for non-figurative painting, I applied to this theme. Textures with sand, grayish other tones



dirty, earthy whites and a scale of grays up to ceramic-like patent blacks for charcoal. The composition of the walls and the ceiling represent an adverse sign that crushes the miners. The whole of the polychrome treatment was represented as a "grisalla". Soft whites, intermediate inks, dark tones and blacks. And as specified in the bases, I framed the work with a wooden strip and delivered it to the Ateneo.

On November 2, they told me by telephone that I had been awarded the First Prize of the IX Autumn Salon. And on day three, the news appeared in the press:



*Ramón Castañer with the jury of the IX Autumn Salon (Valencia)*

*"Yesterday, the qualifying jury of the IX Autumn Salon, Prize, <<Athenaeum Mercantile>>, made up of Mr. Mauro Guillén Prats, president of the Athenaeum, Mr. Roberto Moróder Molina and Mr. Manuel Gitrama González on behalf of from the Society's Board of Directors, Mr. Jenaro Lahuerta, director of the School of Arts and Crafts and professor at the Superior School of Fine Arts; Don José Américo Salazar, secretary of the School of Arts and Crafts and professor of the School of Fine Arts; Mr. Ricardo Lloréns Cifré, artist awarded by the previous Salón de Otoño and Mr. Antonio Salinas García-Nieto, secretary of the Culture Commission of the Athenaeum, who acted as secretary of the jury.*

*After deliberation, they unanimously agreed to grant the <<Athenaeum Mercantile >> Prize endowed with 25,000 pesetas, to the artist Ramón Castañer Segura for his painting entitled "la Mina".*

I received congratulations and congratulations and a tribute dinner was organized attended by numerous friends, including writers, poets, musicians and journalists.

At the end of dinner, the poet, winner of the Valencia prize, Mr. Enrique Durán y Tortajada, dedicated a sonnet to me. The director of the Teatro de Cámara, José Francisco Tamarit, recited a poem and Pepa, my wife, offered a short recital of black poetry.

I, very moved, gave thanks and received a magnificent caricature made by Emilio Panach "Milo", on behalf of the "Bona Nit" club. Among the attendees were the "Valencia de Poesía" prize-winners, María Beneyto, and José María Pérez Martín; the musicians, Matilde Salvador and Paco Llácer; the journalists, Mari Ángeles Arazo, Salvador Chanzá and Juan Alfonso Gil-Albors; the doctors, Gisbert Alós and Rafael Botella.

Also and for the same reason, the management, faculty and students of the Decoration degree at Estudios Barreira met at a dinner-tribute.

In 1964, in the same "Barreira" center, in the month of November, a humorous automobile "rally" was organized. Pepa and I participated with our Renault Dauphine, to which I added a false cardboard radiator and some simulated headlights, with large jars of olives. It was fun. There were many controls and various problems to solve: climb the "Miguelete" counting the steps; present a lamp; wear a cowboy outfit to appear at a control; pick up a hieroglyphic problem and deliver it solved to the next post; go to the Olimpia cinema and ask what movie it opened with. We took the second prize, cup and diploma.

Since our arrival in Valencia, my collaboration with the Teatro de Cámara has been constant. I prepared the scenery. He painted the sketches of the different acts on cardboard and Mr. Gil, a decorator painter who worked at the Teatro Principal, made them.

The first work in which I intervened was "A man and a woman", by Luis Escobar. It was the room of a humble pension. Various passions between a prostitute and a thief. Its interpreters were Concha Lluesma and Toni Campos.

Then it was, "The Busy in Paradise", by José María Pemán. Religious convent, painted in white, gray and black. This was followed by "Crime on the Isla de las Cabras", by Hugo Betti. Interior of a country house, humble and dilapidated.

Central well, simulated. Breaks in beams and doors. The actors were: Concha Lluesma, Maricielo, Trini Guillem and Toni Campos. Another work was, "Today is a party", by Buero Vallejo. Terraces and roofs in a peripheral neighborhood of Madrid. Various heights and overwhelming composition.

"Barracón 62", by Juan Alfonso Gil-Albors. Inside a concentration camp. Wooden barracks with different bunks. The characters symbolize the different characters of the human race, with their flaws and passions.

This was followed by two works by the same author: "El camaleón", a character who embodies a Roman emperor, who due to his way of governing, construction of swamps and dictatorial character, had a resemblance to General Franco. And "La barca de Caronte", which deals with the flight of exiles in a foreign country.



*"Leaf". 1st Medal IX Autumn Salon (Valencia); 2 x 1.45m*



*"Christ of the Light", 1965 (Valencia); 3x2m*



*Mural Church Virgin of Fatima, 1967 (Valencia); 43 m2*

We already had a certain stability and our circle of friends was leaving enlarging, my name as a painter was beginning to be recognized in Valencia.

The priest of the "Cristo de la Luz" parish, an extreme neighborhood of the capital, commissioned me two works for said parish, but since the walls were exposed brick, a mural could not be made, and I had to use the canvas on frame. One, with the image of the holder, vertically, 3 x 2 meters, which would appear on the side in front of the main altar. And the other, 2 x 1 meters, horizontally, a "Pentecost", for the right side. I started the work with the "Christ of Light".

An explosion of bicolor rays, in black and white, with intermediate tones that formed beams, on which the image of Christ was confused, participating in the same light, and only the incarnations, head, hands, and feet, had a real color. .

I made several sketches and ordered the stretchers and canvases from Casa Viguer, they sent them in a truck, disassembled and the canvas rolled up. On the floor of the church I first assembled the frame for the Christ, and then I nailed the canvas, but once its assembly was finished, there was no way to place it vertically. That was very heavy and I had to seek help from a nearby construction site. Three masons came and between the four of us we could barely lift it up and one of them said: *"This is more painful than putting a deceased on his feet."* But at last, we straightened it out and hooked it to the spikes that were on the wall. And I started the work on a stepladder.

That was having youth and love for painting! Later I painted the "Pentecost", with the same characteristics and tonalities

In the church of "Nuestra Señora de Fátima", to which the Filial, nº 9 was attached, where I taught classes, the priest suggested that I paint an allegorical work to the Virgin. I made a sketch of the event that occurred in Liria, with the three children, people with umbrellas and angels. But the priest had another idea, he wanted a Virgin alone, for the apse, in a large mural. I made a sketch again, where the Virgin appeared in an offering attitude, arms open, head slightly tilted forward, as if agreeing to a plea. I prepared the wall with white plastic paint, and on the preparation I began to paint the mural. A conjunction of complementary colors in soft nuances, lines that intersect and bursts of color at the vertices that gradually fade. The Virgin is 10 meters high.

During this time I was realizing that with the abstract I was distancing myself from my pictorial principles: drawing, composition, representation of the human figure, which for me had been very important. So I started a new search in my plastic.

We were in Cuenca and those rugged, tormented landscapes, with their large blocks of stone, resembling fossilized dinosaurs, fit in very well with a new theory. Unite the texture used in the abstract, to a new figuration and with these concepts I prepared an exhibition for the Art Gallery of the "Savings Bank of Southeast Spain", in Alicante. There were 27 works, with representations of the Cuenca landscape.



*Opening of the Southeast Savings Bank Exhibition (Alicante).*

In the catalog of this exhibition, Manuel Esteve Sabater dedicated a presentation to me in which he said: *Castañer contributes –with the discretion and delicacy that characterize the scholar– specific and concrete solutions to the philosophy of art. His philosophical thought is expressed not with a pen, but with a brush and it is extraordinary that the technique of another fine art, that of literature, is used to express a philosophical thought. But Castañer is also a philosopher, above all a painter.*

*The artist produces, according to the Greek philosophers <<similar forms>> - they already recognize the contribution of the artist –<<to all things>>. These things are imitated until the artist produces <<similar forms>> not to all things, but to the sensations that <<all things>> produce in his soul.*

*We could divide the history of art into periods, according to the point that the natural process of all artistic creation (imitated object –sense– soul– mode of expression) is supported by the artist until reaching his work.*

*A first stage where the imitated object is the point of support; a second stage, in which the artist relies on his senses; a third in which the artist leans on his soul; a fourth in which the artist relies on his mode of expression. These points of support that engender styles are never exclusive because the natural process of creation – lever arm – is always the same and it is difficult to find a <<pure style>> in the history of art. These variations are historically recent. Until the latest schools, the <<point of support>> was always in the imitated object. In this search, which is nothing more than a struggle to become independent from the tyrant <object>, extremisms arose that harmonized, on occasions, the balance that corresponds to each of these natural stages in the entire artistic process, leaving such a process immutable because it is natural and of the artist can not leave.*

*Ramón Castañer perfectly balances and harmonizes all the physical and spiritual agents that cover the process of its creation. The creative stimulus*

*Castañer does not start from the object, but is born from his <I> myself, making it the central agent of his own creation.*

*Cuenca, then, has not been painted by Castañer, Castañer went looking for Cuenca because it was the object that responded to the creation that his soul demanded at that moment: The object is not an end, it is a means; its senses are not an end, they are a means; his soul is not an end, it is a means; matter and technique is not an end, it is a means, to paint what his <I> wants.*

*When not long ago he discovered a material –arid and brilliant– that gave his technique the right percentage for the total balance of the factors of his creation, I told him that his work responded to my philosophical conception of art to which perhaps his painting gave life.*

*I believe that his painting has a deep social baggage, because there is order, sincerity and harmony, all within great freedom. This freedom has allowed him a mature evolution in his art, which motivates the splendid reality of his current moment.*

During the days of the exhibition, in the culture classroom, Pepa gave a poetry recital, presented by Vicente Ramos, and several recitals were formalized for the month of April in the "Savings Banks" of Alicante, Murcia, Cartagena, Orihuela and in the "House of Culture" of Alcoy. The recitals were a success. Please me and congratulations, and as in all his performances, extraordinary press comments.



## CHAPTER VII

*He will ensure that this life does not fall  
down, a piece detached from our two pieces,  
that from our two mouths he will make a single  
sword and two eternal arms from our four arms.*

*Miguel Hernandez*





*Ramon Castañer Botella, 1965*

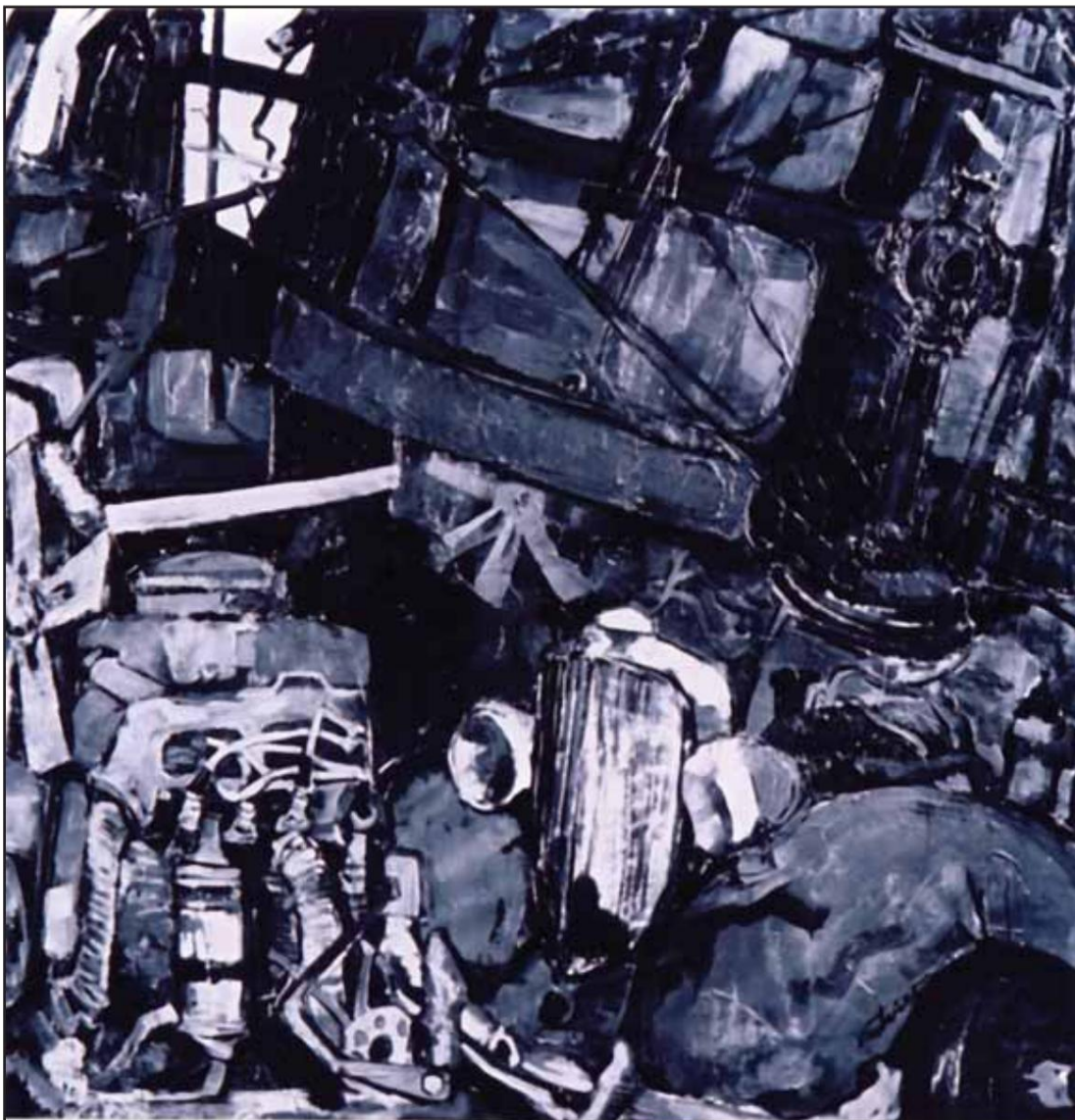
When we returned to Valencia, Pepa told me that she had not had her period. We thought it was due to the hustle and bustle of the recitals, but when the delay was prolonged, an analysis was done that came back positive. We were expecting a child! When I got home with the analysis, Mariángeles Arazo was there. I told them the good news and the three of us hugged. We couldn't believe it, he was our much desired son after ten years of marriage.

We went to see the gynecologist Emilio Bayxauli, who treated her with affection for seeing such an unexpected event for us. The child was born on December 20, 1965, at the "La Cigüeña" clinic in Valencia. At the birth was Mari Ángeles Irún, the wife of Juan Alfonso Gil-Albors, who picked up a boy who weighed almost four kilos and whom we call Ramón. This child came to complete the full life we had, with painting and poetry.

In the summer of 1966, we were in Agres, and our friend Juan Mestre came to visit us and told me that he wanted me to paint a mural painting for his office. I went to see the space, we talked, we finalized and days later I presented him with a sketch of the work to be carried out. It was an allegory to Bocairente and Juan's industry. I divided the scene into two parts, in one of them, factory workers were handling the famous bocairentina blankets, and in the other part, some peasants, men and women, presented the fruits and cereals of the city. The painting kept me busy all summer. I knew very little about Bocairente. My father, due to business needs, visited the Ibáñez family in that town. Sometimes he took me with him, when I was very little, on a dilapidated highway that left Alcoy, passed through Cocentaina, Muro, Agres, Alfafara, and had a stop in Bocairente to go to Villena. In those years, 1934 or 1935, the Ibáñez family were an entire institution in the town. They lived in a hidden square, in a kind of palace, with a distinctive doorway with large knockers, which gave access to the diaphanous hall with an enormous

French window in the background, through which I could see the garden. In the center of the room and on a large pedestal there was a seated image of the Heart of Jesus, smiling and blessing, which impressed me as a child. Maybe that's why I magnified the memory and enlarged the proportions of everything around me.

I didn't know anything about the town, so I took the opportunity to visit the city. I was pleasantly surprised when Juan took me to see the magnificent medieval quarter. We attended some popular festivities on the festivity of San Roque, patron saint of the neighborhood. There were festivals, and the famous "Calimochó" (wine with Coca Cola) was drunk, which pushed a lot. Dances at night, and bullfight, in the famous stone square. The group was made up of Juan Mestre and his wife Concha Navarro, whom I painted a portrait of. The married couple Tono Aracil and Julia Juan and Pepa and me. They were unforgettable days that we remember with nostalgia.



*"Finis Gloriarum Mundi" (Valencia); 1966 1.50 x 1.50m*

I took many notes of typical corners of the city, which helped me to prepare an exhibition that I presented in Valencia, at the "Estil Gallery". Which I completed with six works, 81 x 100 cm, on the theme of Creation. : "Let there be light and

there was light". "Let there be a firmament." "Make the earth sprout fruit trees." "There is in the firmament of the heavens sun, moon and stars". "The animals of the waters boil and birds fly over the earth." "Let us make man in our image and likeness." The rest of the paintings, up to a total of 22, were the landscapes of the medieval neighborhood of Bocairente, of which number 10, "Barrio en fiestas", was acquired by the Valencia City Council, as was number 19 "Finis Glorie Mundi". ", a large canvas depicting a car graveyard. The exhibition was a resounding success and closed on November 26, 1966.

In December 1967, I hang 22 works in the "Jacobo Gallery" in Valladolid. On this occasion, the theme was to pay homage to the rural environment: "The town, the door, the kitchen, the oven, the cupboard, the keys, the bushel, the cellar, the barn, the harnesses, the boiler, the machine to grind, the wheelbarrow, the dovecote, the sad dove, the fireplace, the bedroom, the yoke, the plow, the party and Calvary."

All the Valladolid press commented on the exhibition. The "ABC.", in its Valladolid broadcast, on December 14, on page 76 says: "*A great event is the exhibition of oil paintings by Ramón Castañer at the "Galería Jacobo". Ramón Castañer coming from the field of abstraction, a bit in the expressionist line, has offered us a small anthology inspired by little things: "the door", "the kitchen"...etc. Rich color palette, his paintings of shapes accentuated gray, they have a special attraction for the viewer that transcends the subject or invites you to contemplate it delightfully.*

*Ramón Castañer is accompanied on his artistic itinerary by his wife Pepa de Castañer, a uniquely gifted rhapsode, whom we listened to in the "Salón del Círculo de Recreo". There we were able to appreciate his perfect diction, harmony of gesture and movement, lyrical emotion, tenderness and great interpretive skills. In the first part of the program –García Lorca, Gerardo Diego, Aleixandre, Celaya, Miguel Hernández,... – we were immediately captivated by the charm, the almost magical expression, the warmth and emotion put into the interpretation –recreation, we should say better– of each poem, each ballad, each stanza... Pepa de Castañer is, probably within the Spanish scene, the woman rhapsodist with the most pronounced artistic sensitivity that we have heard in a long time. The second part of the program was dedicated to Christmas, with a wide range of repertoires –from Lope de Vega to Carlos Murciano through Rubén Darío– and ratified the favorable opinion and applause that the first one deserved. (Francisco ALVARO)*

In May 1968, I exhibited my work at the "GUILLERMO" Art Gallery in Gandía, and in the summer we went to Agres, like every year. We load the car with suitcases, paint gear, illusions and projects. Our son was almost three years old, and that year, the ambulance accompanied us, with my disabled mother who we brought from Valencia.

An event was going to cheer us up. Peppa was pregnant. The analysis was done at a Cocentina pharmacy and it came back positive. We were expecting a child again. When we returned to Valencia in September, we went to visit D. Emilio Baixauli, who had taken such wonderful care of our first child, but we found ourselves with the unpleasant surprise that he was seriously ill. His nurse sent us to another gynecologist, whose name I don't want to remember.

On our first visit, we were greeted by a nurse. He led us into a fabled waiting room: Persian rugs, period furniture, brass magazine racks. The doctor received us, recognized Pepa and told us that everything was fine. Since when the last absence and to return next month.

I was preparing an exhibition for Elche, through the mediation of a friend, a teacher at the branch where we taught, Enrique Ramos, who was from Elche. On March 15, 1969, the exhibition was inaugurated, presenting the act Eusebio Ramos.

The visits to the gynecologist continued until Holy Wednesday, April 3, and he told us that the delivery would still take time. Pepa told the doctor, that according to her accounts, it was for that week, to which he replied, –“Women are always wrong”–

On Sunday the 7th, we went to spend Easter at the chalet that our friends Paco Llácer and Carmen had in Benimamet. We spent the day very well and in the evening we returned home. At one in the morning Pepa began to feel unwell, I called the midwife who told me to admit Pepa to the "La Salud" clinic. Very nervous and quickly I drove the car to the sanatorium, but when we arrived the doctor was not there, nor was the midwife, only a nun who was more nervous than me. When the doctor arrived, they took her to the operating room and I went in with them. But they told me that I couldn't stay there and I went out into the corridor.

I waited for a long time, impatient and anguished, until I heard the cry of a baby and I thought it had already been born, but no one came out to tell me anything. Finally, a nun appeared at the door and told me that the doctor wanted to talk to me. I entered a kind of hall and there was the doctor in a white coat and behind him some curtains. He told me that my wife had had a child, but that it was retarded. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, but what mattered to me, at that moment, was Pepa's condition. I pushed the doctor away, pushed aside the curtain, and went into the operating room. There was Pepa, anesthetized but apparently fine. Beside him, there was a table, and a large cloth that covered something. I pushed the cloth aside and a beautiful girl appeared, dead, plump, with black hair. –You had not told me that it was a boy?–, the doctor did not know what to tell me and hesitating, he told me that he was wrong.

Then it came upon me, like a great storm, like a cataclysm, and She was only able to think about how to tell Pepa what had happened when she woke up.

They took her to the room and we were alone. Everything had been so fast and unexpected that we had not notified anyone. When Pepa woke up and asked what it had been, I had to lie, when I told her -a girl, but she has respiratory failure and is in an incubator-, my answers were insecure and she began to mistrust, nervousness arrived and finally, I had to tell her the truth. That the girl had died. I remember that moment as the saddest of our lives.

The next day, a nurse came in and gave her an injection, she told us it was a vaccine, because Pepa was RH negative, and we never saw the doctor again. On Tuesday they said she could go home. I asked for the account at the concierge, but they told me that they would send it. We took a taxi and, luckily, when we got home, we had our three-year-old son waiting for us, to get over that bad situation.

The days passed, without knowing anything. How many times we called the office, they told us that the doctor was in Granada, and we could never connect with him. After a few days we received a visit from the midwife. I think this visit was to see how the situation was. She told us –that it had been a breech delivery, a very difficult delivery and that many complications had arisen–, she tried to collect her fees, which she told us were included in the clinic bill and logically, we replied that when the note arrived We would pay it all. But we never knew anything. Neither clinic invoices, nor those of the consultation during the pregnancy, nor the stay in the sanatorium, not even, that of our girl's box. I don't know where our daughter is!

Faced with the impotence of the situation, I consulted with a doctor, a close friend of ours, Eusebio Molina, who told us –Dear friends, don't go ahead with anything, you have no documents, no proof. You will spend a lot of money on your lawsuit. Forget about everything, for your own good. He gave us the address of a gynecologist, who saw Pepa and discharged her for good.

Many nights when I go to bed, the figure of that little girl covered by a sheet comes to my mind, and I wonder if that was not a setup, and our daughter is in a Valencian home.

On February 11, 1969, I opened a new exhibition at "Galerías San Vicente" in Valencia, 30 oil paintings and 14 drawings, with a prologue by Felipe Vicente Garín, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts. In April

1970, at the insistence of my friend, the poet and art critic, Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde, after exhibiting again in Santander, I held an exhibition at the Provincial Delegation of Information and Tourism. Pepa also gave a recital at the Ateneo. In the *Diario Montañés de Santander*, Leandro Mateo interviewed both of us, evoking our first instance in that city, and J. Marferola, in the newspaper "Alerta", also interviewed both of us. On April 8, and in the same newspaper, Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde says: *This exhibition by Ramón Castañer is a great surprise, after ten years of absence from our city. If in another time he seemed faithful to the pictorial tradition, clear and luminous, of his land in Levante, now we see that he is embarking on a path that is completely his own, certainly uniquely rich in technical experience. Ramón Castañer picks up the opulence and pastiness of the brushstroke from the Mediterranean origin, but today aimed at reproducing the humblest materials, as Isidro Nonell, the immortal, did in his day. For a true painter there are no miserable or sumptuous objects, since color and light can lend unexpected opulences; a lesson that not all artists learn -despite the sublime example of the Dutch- but, when it is received with dedication, as is the case with Ramón Castañer, it produces the most delicious fruits.*

*The painter presents mature oil paintings and delicious drawings, very fine in their coloration. The "still life" of his canvases amazes due to the power of matter and tonality that Castañer has extracted from the most modest household pots and the poorest discarded objects: a kitchen utensil on a white wall, and we already have a splendid example good to paint A vast surface, completely covered with lost junk, toned in an unusual abundance of brown hues, and we find ourselves before a treasure, an artist's display that I dare to describe as a masterpiece. Fully aware as a painter, Ramón Castañer does not resort to any tricks, and in each painting, in each brushstroke, he shows a security and love that, naturally, are condensed in perfection, under the simple appearance.*

*The austere, yet intimately rich coloring of the oil paintings brightens and cheers, youthful and transparent, in the colored drawings: pots too, but with shine and sharpness of glass and copper, animals seen sharply and gracefully, naked in delicate shape and sober harmony. Ramón Castañer's exhibition is really one of the best pictorial ensembles that we have admired for a long time.*  
time.

Our life at home continued calm and complete, watching our son grow. son, so desired. But our worries had also increased.

We had taken care of my mother, who due to her illness did not I could live alone in Alcoy, and our economy noted the increase in the family.

I gave classes and prepared exhibitions, but I needed security, so as not to have to depend painfully on the sale of paintings.

A colleague from San Carlos and a friend, the painter Antonia Mir, who had recently taken the exams for a professorship, advised me to try to present myself for the aggregate exams for the next exams to be called. I thought about it a lot before making up my mind, I got a program, but not as an associate, but as a professor. And a difficult stage began, to combine classes, painting, studies and helping at home, with what it meant for Pepa, to be in charge of an elderly person with total paraplegia, who had to be cared for, dressed, cleaned and give him food

We have always remained united, in good times and in bad, and we have shared joys and sacrifices, so we tried to ensure that I had as much free time as possible to prepare the hundred items on the opposition programme. The first thirty-six corresponded to technical drawing and the rest to art history topics. I was not afraid of the artistic drawing part, since I fully trusted my faculties, but I had lost the habit of studying in terms of theory.

I established a work plan, so that I would prepare a topic, memorize it and to start the next one, I would review the previous ones.

When the oppositions were called I signed them, but I was not sure and I did not apply.

At the beginning of February 1970, the announcement of some oppositions to the Chair of Drawing for Secondary Education Institutes was published in the BOE. The cities where there were vacancies also came, and among a total of 18, there was the square of the Instituto de S. Vicente Ferrer in Valencia. I signed the opposition and in the month of August the date of presentation of the opponents in Madrid was published in the bulletin for the 31st of the same month at five in the afternoon at the Institute of Secondary Education "Beatriz Galindo".

For me the big problem, at that moment, was no longer the opposition, but the situation of my mother since she did not see the way to leave my house for a month and a half or two months. Pepa and her parents told me that since it was summer and we were in Agres, I should calm down and not worry.

I did not know which street in Madrid the Institute was on, and from Agres I got off to Alcoy and went to Telephone, I asked for a Madrid directory, but the name did not appear, only a branch of the Institute appeared as "Simancas", on the street Zaratan. I called, and a guard answered who couldn't give me the address of "Beatriz Galindo. So I thought – when I go to Madrid I'll go through Valencia and I'll go through Information and Tourism, which was on Calle de la Paz, and they'll make it easier for me there. On the 30th, I left for Madrid and went to the office but they couldn't tell me where it was. I continued towards Madrid, it was already eight in the afternoon and I arrived in the capital around two in the morning. I went to Claudio Coello street where the "Cabrera" pension was located –where Bécquer died–, which I already knew. I parked the car, and when I called the guard came, who opened the door for me. I said. –Do you, by any chance, know where the Beatriz Galindo Institute is?– and he answered me –Have you looked at the sign on top of your car?–. I looked, and I couldn't believe it. He had parked the car in front of the Beatriz Galindo!

At half past four in the afternoon I was already in the hall of the institute. I thought there were a lot of people. Later I found out that we were 280 opponents, for the 18 places called.



We entered the auditorium with the court, which was made up of the president and four professors. We sat down and the president declared the opposition open, and he called in alphabetical order. –“Daniel Álvarez”– A boy got up, handed over the memory and the president asked him, –Where is the affidavit that you have the title of professor of drawing?–. Sir, –said the young man– in the bases it did not put that he had to present himself in writing. Didn't you bring it?– and before the silence, he told him –Retire– and read another name from the list. –José Antón. I didn't hear anything else. I opened my wallet, took out a sheet of paper, and drew up an affidavit. The pages flew from my wallet. Everyone asked me for sheets and the statement was drawn up. Then I heard, –Ramón Castañer!– I delivered the memory and the affidavit. And so, until the list was completed.

As it was Friday, we were scheduled for Monday, September 3 at four in the afternoon at the School of Fine Arts.

We went out into the street and I went to the pension, paid the bill and headed for Agres. I spent Saturday and Sunday with the family. He tried to be calm, but "the procession was going inside." On Monday morning, I left for Madrid. I looked for a pension in the Argüelles neighborhood, on Hilarión Eslava street, which was relatively close to the School of Fine Arts.

Between those who eliminated and those who did not show up, we were left with 200. They divided us into groups, and some joined us in the morning and others in the afternoon. My group was from 3 to 5. The first exercise was a drawing from life, a male nude, in size, on large Ingres paper, with charcoal pencil and blenders. The work lasted ten days.

When an exercise was finished, the jury qualified. If the five members of the jury had voted positively, "Unanimity" was given; if four or three voted for you, "Majority"; and if only one or two voted for you, "Minority".

After drawing from life, the next exercise was technical drawing. They gave us a brush for metal parts. Of which we had to do the exploded view, dimensioning of the pieces, plan, elevation and profile and a view of the piece in perspective of a gentleman. We were allowed to bring some tools to be able to disassemble the model and find out how many pieces it was made up of. Two of us sat at a large table, with all the utensils: a board with paper, pencils, charts, rulers, Rotring... etc. I had to sit with a lady in her forties. I perfectly remember his name, but his way of behaving was as "anti-companionship" as possible. I saw how, at the other tables, they helped each other and divided the work, one delimited and the other wrote down. But that woman turned her back on me, took the metallic piece and stealthily, she was disassembling and limiting it. I got so nervous that I went to court and asked for permission to sit alone at a table and do the drawing as I thought it should be done. They gave us a week. It was the only "Majority" that I got in all the opposition. In the other exercises I obtained unanimity.

The third exercise consisted of making a drawing in oblique parallel perspective, where several compositional elements had to appear: a square, several stairs, a large monument, and arches, illuminated with sunlight and shadow projection. The first day you had to draw a sketch on a sheet, which they sealed for you, and then on a 70 x 60 cm drawing paper, you made the sketch of the project to scale. I got a drawing, fantastic. A monolith with a colossal winged Minerva, in the middle of an arcaded square, with a triumphal arch in the background that was reached by a large staircase.

The following exercise consisted of drawing a sketch for the mural of a Nautical Fishing School, the measurements of the cardboard were 70 x 60 cm. I made some fishermen collecting nets, stocky, sweaty; some girls with baskets of fish on their heads and in the background some ship's ribs in the shipyards.

For the fifth exercise, they concentrated us in the Retiro zoo, at nine in the morning, and told us that we had four hours to draw and watercolour, the brown bears, the pink flamingos, and the ivy in the background. We all scattered and at a certain point, our works were stamped to present them, in the workshop at the School of Fine Arts, in the afternoon.

At four, the sixth exercise. From the ivy that we had drawn in the morning, we had to make an ornamental drawing that would serve as a model for a plaster tile. And from the pink flamingo, the section of a leg, to illustrate the text of a science book. The exercise had as delivery deadline, eight in the evening.

We had reached the middle of the opposition, that is, the practical part. Some lists came out with the names of those who passed the written exam, we only had 32 left.

The next day they divided us into two classrooms with one-person desks. The court called one of the opponents, and an innocent hand, extracted from the velvet bag that contained the one hundred subjects of the opposition, the two exam exercises: "Contour curves", (Topographic drawing) and "Engravings of Dürer, Rembrandt, Goya and eighteenth-century engravers". I don't remember if it was three or four hours, which they gave us as the maximum time, but as we finished, the exercise was put in an envelope with the name, it was taken to the court, which sealed it and kept it. The next day, each one broke the seal and read what they had written.

After the oral exam, the so-called "lock in". Each opponent had an hour locked in a classroom, with the material they wanted for their preparation. Later, before the court, it was extracted from the usual velvet bag with the hundred issues, the three that corresponded to you, of which you had to choose one, to expose it to the court and the audience, since the act was from the outset free.

When I extracted the numbers I was impressed, nº 1, "Positions of the point in space", nº 2, "Positions of the line in space" and nº 5, "Dihedral projection of a dodecahedron". I chose number 5, and dedicated myself to drawing the corresponding topic on the blackboard. I was, over an hour, talking and developing it.

It took us five days to examine all of us. And we still needed the last exercise. The explanation of a pedagogical topic to the court. –I took lesson 24. "Primary, Secondary, Composite Colors, and Grades."

We finish on October 15. The list of those we had approved came out. We were 18, for the 18 seats. They sounded cheers and cheers!, but to spoil the party, the President of the court came out and told us not to be so happy, since there could be someone approved without a place. The silence sounded like a bugle.

The next day they made an appointment with the representative of the Ministry of Education and Science to choose a place. Valencia stepped on me and I chose Madrid, because it was the most important square.

I want to put on record here how fantastically well Anselmo Aracil Martí and his wife Carmen Soler behaved with me, whom I met on the street a few days after the start of the opposition and when I told them the reason for my stay, they did not consent. when he returned to the pension. I moved to their house and lived with them the whole time that the exams lasted. For the love shown. For the

encouragement that they gave me in my low hours, for which they collaborated at all times and for the sense of brotherhood. Thanks with all my heart!

At the end of the opposition, my only wish was to get to Agres as soon as possible. So, when I got in the car and was able to relax, already on the road, I was thinking about how they would handle the new situation of a forced transfer at home to go live in Madrid. I had had little time to decide on the choice of the position, and of course, I had not consulted with anyone on a decision that affected the whole family. In Valencia we were happy with the atmosphere achieved. Our son was from Valencia; We had recently bought the apartment where we lived on Calle Artes Gráficas; We had very good friends, –something that was and is very important to us– and many friendships, both in the artistic environment of painting, and in poetry. Images of the opposition, of difficult moments and low morale, and other happy and almost euphoric ones were superimposed while driving. But I was thinking about moving the family, about building a house, about my disabled mother, about finding a flat in Madrid. The desire to see my son, to hug Pepa, to talk to her about everything that worried me, about what my in-laws would say, accumulated in me. But I was happy with what I got.

When I got home, I found support in everyone. The days were calming my spirit and concerns, and life was taking the normal pace. From Agres we returned to Valencia and I resumed classes until my appointment as professor at the BOE came out

Both in the Branch and in Barreira, the course had already started. In the Branch they received with joy the one who had approved the opposition, not like that, Vicente Barreira, because he lost a good teacher. He was cold and dismissive and said goodbye with a face of few friends. Since then, we have not seen each other again.

In December 1970, the appointment of all of us who had approved the opposition appeared in the Official State Gazette. I went to Madrid. to introduce myself to the Delegation of Education and Science, located on Vitrubio street, and then to the Simancas Institute, the place where I was to hold my chair. The "Simancas" was

located in an extreme neighborhood of Madrid. It cost me "God and help" find it. First, the Metro to Ciudad Lineal, then a bus or a van, the P.8 (known as "la guagua"), which would drop you off in an adjoining street. At the Institute I was received by the director, Jesús Ruiz Vázquez, and the secretary, Andrés Bárcena, who introduced me to the drawing attaché, José Luis López Sánchez, and to the interim, Paulina Jolín Buzo. They had a super bulky class schedule. We divided up the hours, and since the Christmas holidays were close, we left the paperwork for the beginning of 1971, when I would already take possession of my classes.

The Simancas Institute consisted of two buildings: the largest block that had been a branch of Ramiro de Maeztu, and a smaller one, a branch of Beatriz Galindo. Separated by a central courtyard with gates and a fountain with fish.

Once the Christmas holidays were over, I settled in a pension in the Argüelles neighborhood, I learned the combination on the subway to get from there to the institute, except on Fridays, when I went by car, and when I finished classes I started the way to Valencia and spent Saturday and Sunday morning with the family. Initially, I left Valencia at four in the afternoon, but I arrived in Madrid at a "rush hour" entrance. Lots of cars and vehicles formed large retentions and my entry into the capital was greatly delayed. So afterwards, I opted to leave on Sunday at ten at night and enter Madrid at dawn, with fewer traffic jams. That round trip lasted several months. It was very heavy

but it made up for me to be with my family. Meanwhile, I was looking for a flat in Madrid, but of course, a flat that would suit my economic and family circumstances: a room for the child, another for my mother and Aunt Amanda, who spent long periods of time with us; another for the girl, (we were forced to seek help for the house, due to my mother's conditions) and another for us, and of course, a room to paint. I dedicated myself to looking in the newspapers. I visited a lot of apartments to rent, but none of them fit our budget. What was affordable was like two hours from my job. And so the weeks went by.

I went back to the boarding house, "Pension-residencia María Teresa", with my soul at my feet.

Meanwhile, I was sorting out the paperwork. In the Delegation they processed me the title of Full Professor of Drawing of the National Institute of Secondary Education "Barrio de Simancas" of Madrid, with the personal registration number A10 EC 2534, signed by the General Director, A. Galino.

With the appointment it was implicit to enroll in the Mutual Fund of the National Corps of Professors, whose offices were on Calle Barquillo, and also in the Surgical Medical Service, whose director, Dr. Antonio Merina, an excellent person, to whom we were united by a good friendship—, when I needed a service from the Mutual Society, he attended me with kindness and courtesy. This is what happened, when we made the transfer to Madrid, who selflessly offered me the ambulance to transport my mother. And so it continued, for ten years, when my mother moved, every summer to Agres and back to Madrid. I also remember the ambulance driver, my good friend, Gutiérrez, always so kind.

One summer, when we were going to Agres, we took my mother down, we put her in the ambulance, and as always, we went out together. We were behind in the car and we stayed to eat at the Restaurant "La Zorrilla" in Albacete. Near Quintanar my car began to heat up alarmingly and I had no choice but to stop. Since I couldn't communicate with Gutiérrez, he didn't even know.

We looked for the Telephone office and I asked please, since it was an emergency, that they communicate urgently with the restaurant. I explained to him, in the man's voice that answered, the situation, and begged him to go outside and if he located an ambulance, tell the driver to come to the phone. So he did. "Don't worry, D. Ramón," Gutiérrez told me, "I'll take care of your mother as if she were my own." So it was. He fed her and took her to the Agres farmhouse. At the "Simca" house in Quintanar, they repaired our car and we set out. Arriving in Bocairente, I saw from afar the blinking of the ambulance that was already heading to Madrid, after having left my mother with my in-laws. We stopped, and I effusively appreciated the act of my friend Gutiérrez.

I was still looking for a flat, and in March a friend, Eduardo Moutón, offered me one for rent, located on Calle Orense, with a contract for only two years and we moved on Easter holidays. The apartment was spacious and had several bedrooms.

Once installed and after the hassle of conditioning it, I started painting again. My schedule at the institute was only in the morning, therefore, I had the afternoons free to dedicate them to painting. The new apartment was great, it only had one drawback, it didn't have a suitable place to set up a studio. I solved it as I could, I had a huge "office" where I could work, but that room was a place of passage and every time I finished a painting session I had to remove all my belongings and put them away. It was heavy, but with good will and a bit of organization, things went ahead. The same thing happened to me with the illustrations that

He was doing it for the "Marfil" publishing house. He painted with gouache at the dining room table, and he had to prepare the jars of paint, water, cardboard... etc, and then remove everything to leave the table free. But, in this way, I did a lot of work for said publishing house.

My painting was undergoing a change. I was interested in the plastic representation of the drawing, the form in its maximum exponent, trying to express a symbolic background. Structured masses and spaces within a micro-realistic framework. I went to the Retiro park in Madrid, to the "country house", and I drew tree trunks: holm oaks, acacias, eucalyptus trees, cypress trunks, rough, tormented trunks. That summer, in Agres, I searched for ancient olive trees, like petrified beings, like Pompeian fossils, resembling human figures. And I made a series of oil paintings with this theme. I also painted, old women with trunk bark meat: old chestnut-trees or vendors of candied apples, it was the woman, "who goes towards the earth being earth."

One day I took two works, and just like I did in Paris, I devoted myself to touring galleries in Madrid, until I visited the "Héller Gallery". The gallery manager was Jorge Disdier, and my painting impressed him. We agreed on an exhibition for the month of January 1973. I prepared 17 oil paintings, 100 x 81 cm, framed them with white ribbon, and reinforced the themes with titles taken from poems by various poets: "You are beautiful like the stone...", "Tonight many children will be born...", "Have you noticed how cold the chestnut trees are?". "Sighing for air naked of hatred...". On the 12th the exhibition was inaugurated, many people attended, friends from Madrid and Alcoy, the press and radio. It had a lot of repercussion, and in Valencia, Eduardo López Chavarri commented in "Las Provincias": *Ramón Castañer exhibited, with happy success, in the "Héller" gallery in Madrid; His oil paintings make up a beautiful catalog through which quotes parade-titles by V. Aleixandre, María Beneyto, Carmen Conde, Gloria Fuertes, etc. For this exhibition, which is having such an excellent reception, Rodrigo Rubio wrote the presentation in the catalogue.*

At the exhibition I met the art critic, Augusto García Viñolas, who wrote in "Pueblo":

*"Man is a deranged tree." This beautiful verse by Hurtado de Mendoza could be used as a symbol of Ramón Castañer's painting. We enter a forest, but in a magical forest, where some venerable trunks struggle to become human. We witness a metamorphosis of the plant kingdom, explained in detail by a painter who makes realism fantastic by rushing reality. The theme is seen accordingly: but that robust nature encloses a lyrical soul, which makes the monumental form accessible and gives tenderness of life to those millennial trunks that yearn for their human condition.*

We were still looking for a flat and the time of our rental contract was coming to an end. One day, at the Institute, a colleague, with whom I was not very friendly, came into the secretary's office where I was, but since the subject of the apartment was so hot, it occurred to me to ask her if she knew of any apartment that we could buy or rent, and he told me -one is for sale in my house, well priced and quite large-. He gave me the address and I told him to set up an interview with the owner. At five in the afternoon we saw the apartment, it had possibilities for our needs, we liked it, and the price seemed good to us, we stayed at a notary's house -D. Juan Manzano, with whom we had a great friendship from Alcoy- and in a short time we organized the change of house. Now he could have a room to paint. I didn't need

large spaces, just feeling surrounded by my things and being able to dispose of my tidy mess.



*1972; 100 x 81cm; Heller Gallery Exhibition*

## CHAPTER VIII

*Teaching we learn.*

*seneca*





The Simancas Institute has constituted a large part of my life in Madrid. I have developed all my official pedagogical work in the same place, and although I had enough score to apply for another destination, I did not want changes or better institutes.

As I have already said, I took possession of my classes in January 1971, and on October 1 of that same year I was appointed "Head of Studies" by order of the General Directorate of Personnel of the Ministry of Education and Science, prior approval of the faculty cloister. The appointment was signed by the director of the center, Jesús Ruiz, and the secretary Andrés Bárcena. A position that I held for three years, until October 1, 1974, when I was appointed secretary and remained with said appointment for six years. When I started at the Institute, located in an extreme neighborhood

of the capital, there was still a respectful student body, who he stood up when the teachers entered. From the first moment I tried to connect with them and make them see that for me, the only important subject was drawing. That is why I made an effort to facilitate their teaching and make the classes enjoyable.

At that time, there was, I don't know how long before, an agreement, not institutionalized, between publishers and teachers, through which the teacher imposed a text and received financial compensation from the publisher. That seemed outrageous to me and I never fell into the trap. My students have never bought textbooks. I explained the subject following the program, drawing pictures on the blackboard, solving problems out loud. He dictated the concepts and whoever wanted to took notes. It fostered interest in drawing. I have not taken exams, neither quarterly nor at the end of the course. Only, and he had no choice, in the September exams. The work plan in class was always the same, both for the first courses and for COU. He explained a sheet on the blackboard, the way to do it, the centering and development. I left a few days for its execution and then I corrected and graded. At the end of the month, to put the grades, the student went to the blackboard, I dictated the evaluations obtained, they added the amount and divided it by the number of sheets made. Thus, each of them was aware of their work and their work. At the end of the course, and by the same procedure, they themselves obtained the average grade and qualified themselves. Naturally, I took into account the predisposition of the student. Some of them were very gifted for drawing and with little effort got very good grades. But I valued the effort of the student who was not gifted, but who was a hard worker. What he could not allow was laziness. He gave all kinds of facilities, but in class you had to work, and as a rule, keep composure and respect. The program was followed and sometimes, he put a work of his own invention, to see the level of capacity, inventiveness and spontaneity of the student.

Sometimes, you would meet a rowdy student. I remember once, I kicked a first grade boy out of class because his behavior was unbearable. One fine day I told him to take the books, leave class and report to the Head of Studies. The boy went home. The next day, the student's father came to talk to me. He was made a basilisk. At first, I did not understand the argument, by which the father explained to me that I had taken him

he loved his son. In short, the kid had said at home that I couldn't stand him because he was from "Atleti", and I was from "Real Madrid". I told his father that it had been forty years since I had seen a football game.

At the beginning of living in Madrid, I used to go to the Institute in my car. It left from Orense street, Raimundo Fernández Villaverde, República Argentina Square, Joaquín Costa, Francisco Silvela, Manuel Becerra Square, Alcalá, Ciudad Lineal, Hermanos García Noblejas Avd. to the San Blas cinema, Arcentales Avd. and Zaratán street. The journey was long and painful. Many days when going up Calle Alcalá through the Carmen neighborhood, as it was rush hour, I have come to see an impressive traffic jam, up to thirty times, how a traffic light turned green, while I was stopped at the same point. I arrived at work nervous, in a foul mood, and finally, I opted to ride the subway. For many years I attended all the reforms, extensions and works on the subway lines. At first I took line 2, "Cuatro Caminos–Ventas" and changed to line 5, "Ventas–Ciudad Lineal", there I went out onto the street and took the "P-8", which was a dilapidated bus that dropped me off. near the Simancas. When they inaugurated new lines, faster, with modern wagons, the trip was more pleasant. And our change of flat made it easier for me to travel from "Manuel Becerra–Ventas", and from here to "Pueblo Nuevo", where I took the new extension to "Las Musas" and after three stations, I arrived at the "Simancas" stop, with exit to the door of the institute.

Almost always at the same time, men and women, we filled the subway cars. The same men and the same women have grown old together, we have grown gray together at the same daily time, and things of the big cities, of the dehumanization of the cities, we have never addressed each other, not even the "good morning".

During 25 years I have known several directors at the Institute: Jesús Ruiz Vázquez, a gentlemanly kind man who was a great friend of Pepa and me. We have shared a table and tablecloth with him many nights in typical Madrid restaurants or those café-theaters of the 70s. Álvaro García Velázquez, who was a director in the transition years, belonged to Opus, and in those years, critics politically speaking, the leftist sector of Simancas took it out on him and made his teaching life very difficult. Later, Fernando Arroyo, a young professor of Art History, Valencian like me, who joined me a great friendship, I coincided as secretary for many years, and due to a misunderstanding, abruptly ended the collaboration. He was followed by Fernando Tato, a close friend and colleague. We had a very good time, and now, although I am retired and he is still active, we continue to have a good relationship. Later, two women were in charge: Paloma Sánchez, who obtained considerable improvements for the Institute from the administration, and María Ayllón. And the last director I met, and he still remains in office, was Román Elizalde, also an excellent person who even came to collaborate as an actor in the "Teatro Simancas" group that Pepa directed.

In 1987 the Language and Literature seminar, which was governed by the professor, Antonio Garrapiz, organized a festival with several students from the Institute, and asked for my collaboration. But since he had thought of a poetry recital and Pepa, my wife, had been on several occasions giving poetry talks and recitals to the students, he asked her to choose the poems and rehearse for the group of students. Pepa and I organized the event. She chose the poems, and selected the kids, after several readings, and I was in charge of the musical montage. The session was held in the Institute's auditorium. It was full of people: students,

teachers and parents of students. It was a true success, especially the final number, in which all those who had participated recited to the beat of a tropical rhythm, accompanied by bongos, maracas and drums, the poem by García Lorca "I will go to Santiago de Cuba". And the actors, from the stage, went down to the room throwing streamers with their hectic rhythm. The surprise, success and enthusiasm of the students was such that they thought of forming a small theater group that would perform every year. And this was the beginning of a series of works that were put on stage and of a group of students, who on the occasion of the performances, formed a group of friends, formed a group of friends, not only actors, but lighting technicians, pointers and collaborators for everything. Students from all day and night groups participated, and during all the years that this group lasted it was a sign of true camaraderie and good work.

In 1988, two of his farces, "Sancho Panza en la Ínsula" and the "Fablilla del secreto bien guardado" were staged from Alejandro Casona's "Jovial Altarpiece" by Alejandro Casona. When the works were already well rehearsed and close to the premiere, the group would come home and we would record the header with the cast of the program, the names of those who were taking part, and I appearing as the author of the set design and the musical montage and Pepa as the director. We did so for many years. We spent wonderful afternoons talking about projects, theater, music, the future.

In 1989 the group already had a name: "Te. Yeah. Simancas Theater Group", and it worked with him until 1995, which was the last year of the group. When we had to request a subsidy from the Ministry, we presented the forms with the mentioned name, and if it came to us, always meager, we invested it in utensils for the theater: batteries and cannons for lighting, rental of costumes, and materials for the production. of decorations.

In June 1989, and with great expectation, we staged the interlude "Sangre gorda", by Serafín and Joaquín Álvarez Quintero; a monologue by Gregorio Martínez Sierra, "Una señorita sensible" in the first part and the farce "Cuckold, beaten and happy" by Alejandro Casona, and the interlude by the Quintero brothers, "El flechazo", in the second.

In 1990, as an exercise for the students to get to know different styles of theater, he prepared "Historias para ser contadas", by Osvaldo Dragún, "The story of how our friend Panchito González felt responsible for the bubonic plague epidemic in South Africa." South", with five characters; and in the second part, a monologue by August Strindberg, "La más fuerte" and "Oración" by Fernando Arrabal.

The theater group was taking more configuration. Given the success he had obtained in his previous performances, the number of students who signed up was increasing. The truth is that Pepa knew how to give real content to her work: she taught the students to vocalize, to pronounce correctly, to give intentionality to each sentence, to value silences, to know how to behave on stage, to create confidence in the individual and develop teamwork. It was interesting to see the change experienced by the student, from the first rehearsals to the end of the performance. I would say that the kids even improved their character. Nobody bothered to have a small part. They knew how to get the most out of the character, and in this way, Pepa knew how to instill confidence and security in their behavior in the students. The credit that the theater group had acquired at the Institute was so great that in 1991 we

prepared the staging of a work, already in "C major". "María la mosca" by Miguel Sierra, and even participated as an actor, the professor of Physics and Chemistry, Román Elizalde, in the role of "Pichuli", a bartender in the whores' bar.

We had to figure out how to adapt our small stage, without theatrical resources, and divide it into two stage spaces. Half in "Loles Bar" and the other half in María's apartment. A different musical tune for each space reinforced the intentionality of the scene. I painted a background with bottles, and I adapted an old radio set, through which the news from "Radio Nacional" recorded on a tape was broadcast. A telephone, type "herald", black, which played an important role.

On the day of the, let's say premiere, the play was a real success, and we thought of inviting the author of the play to a performance. And so it was, he came and was amazed at how a high school group had been able to represent such a difficult work with such mastery. Later, he spoke with Pepa, whom he congratulated for such a professional staging and greeted the students for their work. He told us that he would always keep the memory of how a group of non-professional actors had brought to his skin the evocation of his favorite work.

There was already a good number of actors for the staging of a delicious humorous play by Carlos Llopis y Tono, "La viuda es sueño", which was staged in 1992.

The following year, as a tribute to Jardiel Poncela, we programmed "The weaker sex has done gymnastics", a play with an extensive cast of characters, for 29 students.

In 1994 the tribute was for the Quintero brothers, and Pepa chose "Un pregón sevillano", a funny farce with four characters. "Trial visit", with two actresses and one actor, and later, a main course, "La puebla de las mujeres" with fourteen characters.

In 1995, the year of my retirement and, therefore, the last of this theatrical adventure that gave such good results, Jardiel Poncela's "Un marido de ida y vuelta" was staged with 16 characters.

I have to put on record, in this chapter, the magnificent collaboration of the Parents of Students Association, who supported us at all times and even created a payroll, from day one, for Pepa. It was a pity, that the seed that we spread in the theater group, there was no one to continue it and the work that Pepa began with such dedication was allowed to be lost.

I've met a lot of people at the institute over 25 years. I have lost track of some, such as: Victoria Osés, Eli Blanco, Soledad Gijón, Eulalia Sánchez, or Carmen Marcos. At Simancas I had many friends, but few close friends. Madrid is very wide and long to foster good relations in the distance. But, in any case, we managed to form a gathering in which the most like-minded met: Jesús Ruiz, Antonio Aróstegui and his wife Marita, Fernando Arroyo y Amparo, Andrés Bárcena and Emilia, Adolfo Martín y Teresa, María Luisa Ponte, and María Antonia Ozaeta. I also had a good friendship with Carmen Castro, a professor of History, to whom I have to thank for the itineraries and tourist routes that she made for the trips that Pepa and I made.

My collaboration with other seminaries was always constant. For the Greek teacher, María Antonia Ozaeta, who several times prepared staged readings of Greek works, such as "Socrates", "Hipólito", "Medea", etc., I designed the costumes and recorded the musical montage.

How many times have I collaborated with the professors of the History seminar, accompanying them with a large group of students, either to Toledo, to Segovia or to the Archaeological Museum of Madrid, illustrating the trips with my art explanations.

As a secretary, I remember that a high school student, imprisoned in the Caramanchel Model Prison, asked the Ministry for the right to take an examination for two failed subjects. The Delegation sent a communication to Simancas so that we could carry out the examination. The subjects were, mathematics and Latin. It was the professor of mathematics, Máximo Anzola and the professor of Latin, Mari Luz Navarro, and me, as secretary, to attest to the act.

Many times I took my COU students to the Prado Museum to explain to them the painting of Velázquez, El Greco or Goya. To interesting exhibitions, like the one that was carried out on "Sorolla and Zorn", or to the exhibition of Escher's impossible figures. To the pictorial exhibition "Madrid, Centro y Periferia" in which "La calera" by the painter from Alcoy Fernando Cabrera appeared. To the magnificent exhibition of José María Sert, with a splendid assembly of the sketches of his work in the Vich cathedral. And many times, with different groups, to explain Picasso's "Guernica". And I also went with them to some theatrical performances or musical audiences at the March Foundation.

At the end of each course we had to submit to the Secondary Education Inspection, a report of the work carried out throughout the course, which included the schedules of the subjects. In my case, drawing and crafts, and technical drawing in the COU courses. This memory recorded all the activities that had been carried out during the course, and how the additional hours had been distributed. Every year I sent a dossier with the programming, in which I inserted a picture of each student, a photographic report of the work carried out in the subjects corresponding to manual work, or artistic expression, and also, a collection of photos of the representation theatrical that year.

The drawing program, especially for the first courses, was perhaps a bit heavy. The children, who had hardly been subjected to the discipline of a drawing, found it a little hard to keep up with the programming. Sometimes I would draw a bison from the cave painting on the blackboard, or any other free theme, I would explain the symbology, and each one would draw their interpretation on a sheet. This helped me to know the creative capacity of the kids and make them interested in the subject.

Logically, the students tried with a thousand tricks to deceive the teacher. Sometimes, they would present me with a picture from another classmate that had already been corrected, in which they had erased my grade. Which forced me to wedge the sheets. In drawing, it is not possible to take "chops" to copy, but it can be traced.

I remember once, that a boy presented me with a drawing, which I noticed was traced. I blamed the boy, but he swore and swore that he hadn't copied it. We checked it by the glass method and the transparency matched perfectly, but he continued, this time with tears, that he had not traced anything. It was already making me wonder. And when I insisted, she answered between sobs – "I haven't traced it, I haven't traced it, my mother has traced it".

As I have said before, the Institute was divided into two architectural blocks that formed an "L", separated by a fenced patio. In the rainy and cold months it was a nuisance to go from one building to another. And it occurred to me, as a class exercise for COU students, to encourage them to draw plans for a third building that would join the two old blocks. We went down with a tape measure to take measurements of the plant. Then they did the elevation, with several façade models and as the project was extensive, we included a drawing room for our subject, assembly hall, music room and other rooms. we present

the project and the plans to the Secondary Education Delegation at the request of Simancas. And it must have seemed good to them, because they approved the project, and they sent us the architects who made the building, which currently joins the two primitive blocks.

When I started at the Institute, we had a qualified person, Victorino Molina, a state official, who came every month to pay our salaries, until the Ministry passed the collection of salaries to bank accounts. I maintained a good friendship with him, even outside the Institute, which lasted until his death.

In these, my memories of so many years dedicated to teaching, so many hours of living with teachers and students, I still have the longing for those who have left and those who are no longer here: Jesús Ruiz, Lola Etxevarría, José Luis López Sánchez, Antonio Garrapiz, Carmen Pastor, María Rodríguez, José Araujo, and Antonio Montón. And of course, the good concierge Ángel Sánchez; the "fix it all", Valeriano, who served as a model for me, in a painting, "El belenero", which is in the Diputación de Alicante; and the bartender, Valentín Ajero. On December 20, 1973, the attack on Carrero Blanco was committed.

I remember the day perfectly, because it was my son's birthday. That morning when I accompanied him to school, we saw great police movement: cars, motorcycles, and helicopters. Classes were suspended, and all radio and television stations broadcast extensive reports on the event.

On November 20, 1975, Franco died, and two days later D. Juan Carlos 1 was proclaimed King of Spain. With his proclamation the political transition began and on July 3, 1976, the King appointed Adolfo Suárez, as President of the Government and in November the Cortes approved the Law for Political Reform, and a Referendum is called for Spaniards of legal age to express their opinion. The streets are filled with posters, and vans with loudspeakers, and radio and television, broadcast the song, "Speak, people, speak." Once the Referendum was approved, the first political acronyms appeared, which had to be deciphered to know what they meant, it was like "The Invasion of acronyms": PSOE, AP, PCE-PSUC, UCD, PNV, PDC, FN, etc. These acronyms appeared on the flags, stickers, posters, t-shirts and caps, in all the street demonstrations. Political rallies and speeches are organized. We assisted several, Carrillo and Ramón Tamames, in the Ventas bullring; Blas Piñar, leader of Fuerza Nueva, gathered his sympathizers and affiliates in the Plaza de España; Felipe González with the socialists, in several cinemas; Alianza Popular, with Fraga Iribarne, in the halls of large hotels and Unión de Centro Democrático in the Salamanca cinema. Each one gave their slogans, great hopes and many promises. In my house and on the 4th floor in the center, a political party was installed, the "Communist Movement of Madrid."

What a hustle and bustle we had on the farm. Long queues at the portal to collect pamphlets to distribute. What if you go up photocopying machines, what if you go down boxes with propaganda with the posters to paste, those who came to join, those who came to collect..., so much opening and closing the doors to the street, that the hinges broke and had to take them away to fix them.

I think it was the end of May 1978, when there was an attack in the "California" cafeteria on Goya street. There were deaths and great destruction, and days later some posters appeared in the streets of the capital, in which the Communist Movement accused Fuerza Nueva of being responsible for the attack.

On Sunday, June 18, we went with some friends to the Palacio de los Deportes, where Maurice Bejart's ballet was performing. When we got home, as it was already late, and the insecurity was already beginning to be felt, Pepa and I commented on the lack of

from the portal door while we were going up in the elevator. We had hardly entered our flat when there was a loud bang from our stairwell. The windows of the farm and of the adjoining houses were blown up, the expansive slingshot ripped off the lock on our door and blew up both elevators, while thick smoke rose everywhere. Someone had placed a rubber bomb-two, at the door of the apartment where the political party was, which was practically destroyed. Doors and partitions were blown up and caused great damage to the adjoining floors. People milled around screaming and crying. Firefighters, police and security guards arrived, and for several days we had surveillance at the portal.

Some time later, the Community of Neighbors sued the party, not because of its political significance, but because the location of a party should not be allowed on a neighboring farm, due to the serious consequences that can cause. By court order they had to vacate the apartment.

The political situation of the moment was also felt in the institute. Student assemblies began to form and since they were not authorized, they constituted a danger. One night, the nocturnal students met in a large assembly. Slogans were issued and each one stated the reasons for their discontent; class stoppages were agreed, with or without the consent of the teacher. Someone called the police, who with a large automobile, cars, jeeps, flashing lights and sirens, broke into the Simancas. They got inside and with a blow they dissolved the assembly. There were several detainees who were taken to the General Security Directorate. Two days later an extraordinary cloister was convened, and the leftist party attacked the director of the center, accusing him of being the "snitch." It was very unpleasant, and soon after the director resigned.

Calls with bomb warnings were also received. While I was a secretary, the phone rang one day and a distorted male voice told me that in half an hour a bomb would explode at the institute. We emptied the center, I called the police, who showed up quickly, they asked me who had answered the ad call. I told them that I had received the call, and I had warned them. When they searched the institute, they forced me to go with them. In the following bomb warning calls – and there were many – we would empty the Simancas, notify the police and I would disappear instantly.

With the arrival of socialism, everyone wanted to be progressive, and for many, progressivism meant breaking with the old rules of coexistence. The youth believed that progressivism was the familiarity between teacher and student, and they began to be all equal. I stopped being D. Ramón Castañer, to be "el Casta"; the priest of Religion, whose name was D. Ambrosio, was "el Ambros" and thus, "el Garra", "la Castro", "la Galé"... The rules of respect and discipline were abolished. The teacher could not apply any corrective, because he was not supported by the system, rather, he was sanctioned with a file. The Ministry was undermining the authority of the teaching staff, and was undermining the National Body of Professors until its total abolition. –When I retired, my Chair, retired with me–. Access to professorships was established with endorsement and approval, and many associates became professors.

A new study plan was implemented, by which no student could be suspended in Primary and they all had to go on to the next year. The consequence was that the students lost the stimulus. The one who had never had an interest passed the courses; and the one who really made an effort, found no compensation. The doors of the universities were opened for the whole world and

Naturally, in the universities they complained about the low level of the students, blaming the high school teachers for the fact that many reached the university writing with misspellings, and we blamed the teachers.

My experience of so many years dedicated to teaching, is that all the reforms and new study plans are carried out at the desks of the offices in the ministries, where the tendencies of the party prevail, above the authentic educational and educational interest.

On February 8, 1994, I turned 65, therefore, it was my retirement. I asked the Ministry for an extension until the end of the academic year, which was granted. On September 30, 1994, I went into a situation of forced retirement, with 35 years of service, eight months and 17 days. Later, the classmates of the institute and students gave me farewell tributes, with gifts, gifts and scrolls with everyone's signatures.

When I approved the opposition, many people said: Ramón, he has finished painting. But I have shown that for me, the drawing class was not an impediment, but rather the privilege of being able to paint what I felt, –and still want–, without giving in to other demands.

After the exhibition of "Héller", which served to consolidate me in my new pictorial line, an impetus was created within me that prompted me to continue painting in a dizzying manner. It had been almost nine years since I had exhibited in Alcoy and I prepared an exhibition for the "Capitol" Art Gallery, run by Fina and Francisco Picó. Sixteen gouaches and four large oil paintings with poetic texts such as: "What will become of things when man is finished?"; "Things, our things, / they like that I want them", verses by Gloria Fuertes; or "Of all the objects, the ones I love the most are the used ones", by Bertolt Brecht; or, "Guardes com un tresor d'antiga història els costums casolans", by Joan Valls.

The exhibition was inaugurated on March 2, 1974, and always our good friend, Antonio Revert, read some pages of the presentation, which the newspaper "Ciudad" commented on and reproduced:

"On Saturday afternoon, at the Capitol Art Gallery, an exhibition of works by the painter Ramón Castañer from Alcoy was inaugurated. The inaugural act brought together prominent personalities of letters and art, before which the writer Antonio Revert read some pages of presentation "that said: After several years, too many, of absence, Ramón Castañer returns to his native Alcoy, with a shipment full of simple, affable, everyday, realistic things, with the best shape and touches of crisp chromaticism, whitewashed backgrounds within a new figuration And he appears as a dealer, with a plastic bag on his back, full of simplicity and objects dear, endearing, worn by use, but revived by a thaumaturgical force that exalts them, projecting them from a simple anecdote to a deep category. When one's retina is already tired of expressive stumps, of informal spots, of telluric wails, of incipient schemes, of abstractions, in short, of all kinds, Ramón Castañer returns and offers us, in the bowl of his paintings, pure water, sincerity, make spontaneous and, at the same time, paradoxically manufactured, flow from a work that throbs, not only physically and spiritually, through his canvases, but with it he transmits to us the humanistic breath that we already had lost in painting. In this impersonal world, of mass societies, of endless vagaries, Castañer once again reconsiders the problem of being in the painting, because beneath it there is something more than an aesthetic question. Underground is a whole moral, philosophical and even religious attitude, it might be said,



*that its author tries to instill in us, with a primitive, rediscovered and essential technique. In the via crucis of every artistic performer, Castañer returns to kilometer zero and again, as in the myth of Sisyphus, he begins again, but this time with vigorous realism, impressive magic. The exhibition that we are inaugurating today is ready to assert it. We, after the unparalleled enthusiasm for the artist, we are extremely happy for the friend, we welcome him and we augurally tell him. Ramón, welcome home!—*

"The attendees rewarded with numerous applause the prose presenter of Antonio Revert, while the painter Ramón Castañer, who is accompanied by his wife Pepa, they received all kinds of congratulations and congratulations for the great exhibition, truly magnificent"

We were still living in Valencia, it was 1970, Modesto Higuera prepared a recital for Pepa in the auditorium of the Madrid Ateneo. On the day of the recital, February 25, Modesto Higuera read some praising pages full of poetic words at the presentation ceremony. Modesto said: *"Pepa is our best current rhapsode. May her voice full of love, tenderness, protest and sometimes heartbreaking identify with you for the good of all and essentially of the poet who finds in her the best interpreter of his creation"*. The program had a first part dedicated to poets of the generation of '27, and poems by Miguel Hernández, Blas de Otero, López Anglada, Manuel Alcántara and María Beneyto, and a second part, with a selection of lilted and sensual black lyrics. that I accompanied with a bongo. After the act, many people came in to congratulate Pepa and among all of them was Carmen Llorca, who, after an affectionate greeting and praise for Pepa, with that "bayosa" voice, told me, -Ramón, let's see if we can prepare an exhibition of your works here in Madrid.

In 1975, when we had settled in Madrid, Carmen Llorca, who was then president of the Ateneo, called me, and we arranged an interview. I attended the appointment and we agreed to an exhibition of my works for February 1976.

The political situation of the Ateneo was going through a difficult moment, Carmen had been appointed president by a management commission in 1974, but with the death of Franco the leftist sector began to mobilize and they made life difficult for the president. The person in charge of the artistic section was Antonio Manuel Campoy, an art critic for ABC, well known and little friend of Carmen's.

The inauguration of the exhibition took place on February 10, with great attendance from the public, radio and press. Carmen warned me that she would not attend the event, because she did not want to appear in any public manifestation of the Athenaeum.

Pepa and I had a very good friendship with the journalist Guillermo de la Cueva, who ran the program "Poesía e Imagen" on Spanish television, and he agreed with me that he would send a journalist and a cameraman to the exhibition to do a report on me. But they did not notify me, and the day they went I was not there, and Mr. Campoy sent them to the Santa Catalina room, also at the Ateneo, where a friend of his was exhibiting, and not to the Prado room where my exhibition was. They are "television" things, and there was a lot of tension and "swell" in the environment. I found out about all this from a janitor, whom I ran into one day distributing political propaganda.

The exhibition was very visited. I remember that I had a work, size 100 x 81 cm, which represented several keys hanging on a white background. It was a kind of trompe l'oeil. Ana Mariscal came to the exhibition, with whom we had a very good relationship, and asked me why I had hung up those keys, and when I told her

that it was a painting, he went to the work, and with the gesture of "Saint Thomas" he tried to take one of the keys.

Critics appeared in the press in "Pueblo", by García Viñolas; a beautiful article by the poet Luis López Anglada, in the Estafeta Literaria, entitled "Los Azorinianos Primores de Ramón Castañer", (which is reproduced in the chapter dedicated to "presentation and press"), and on ABC almost an obituary, of course, de Campoy, who says: *Ramón Castañer must be included among the most distinguished representatives of the new realism, since all the data that single out the genre coincide in his work: great draftsman, faithful colorist, poetic creator of environments.*

*This realism chooses to create the less lavish elements of the daily environment, (Castañer favors the humblest: a chair, the cupboard, the bundle of clothes on the chair), substituting the emphasis of the sumptuary models for a series of isolated and modest witnesses of living, which, by starring in the painting, become symbols. modest poetic news runs through this neat and detailed work, with which it is already necessary to count when inventorying the new realism among us (Sala del Prado, Ateneo)*

Months later, Carmen Llorca left the presidency of the Ateneo.

During this time, my contact with Pepe Tamarit, with whom I had already collaborated in Valencia in the chamber theater, and who also lived in Madrid, gave us the opportunity here in the capital to carry out some theatrical projects together again. Perhaps it was around the year 1976, at the "Ismael" café-theater, Pepe Tamarit directed the play by Evaristo Acevedo, "Now we can breathe", for which I did the setting and costumes. It was a play with grace, with humor, in which the new airs of the recent Spanish democracy were exposed. The leading roles were played by: Irene Daina, and Manolito Cano.

At the "Alfil" theater in Madrid, "El Tótem en la arena" by Juan Alfonso Gil-Albors was revived as a premiere, for which I made the sets and setting. The scene takes place on an island in the Pacific. Arenas, abundant vegetation, appropriate clothing, profuse lights, and background music. The play only has two characters, played by the famous Ana Mariscal and Toni Campos.

In 1976, at the "Music-Hall Pirandello", the musical comedy "Si Eva would have dressed" by Argentine author Leo Alza was presented. I made the scenic setting and the costumes, which the author loved. Roberto Berki composed the musical numbers and the performers were: Sila Montenegro, Alfonso del Real, Paco Valdivia, Jeny Llada, and Mara Vila. One of the danceable numbers was a can-can, which the author called "can-can of democracy". I did a design of the time, with white powdered makeup, a redhead wig with a quiff, and a wide skirt, lined on the inside with the flags of the political parties, which naturally showed up when the can-can was unbridled. I managed to scandalize a theatrical critic for the audacity to take political symbols for granted, according to him.

At the beginning of 1977, Antonio Olano wrote a play that premiered at the "Alfil" theater, entitled "Sin in Madrid", with music by Juan Pardo, Paco España, as the protagonist and Yeda Brown, as the main actress. It was a musical, variety type, and for these numbers I made some wonderful drawings of the costumes. There was a party at Juan Pardo's chalet, for the presentation of the musical pieces, my drawings, and the choreography, which was attended by Olano, Tamarit, who was the director, and Juan Felpeto, as producer, who he was the "pagan". They talked about the propaganda and they commissioned me to create the poster for the play, and the premiere was formalized for the month of July. They gave me a check as an advance on my account, which I

they would finish paying after the summer. I went on vacation, but to my surprise, when I delivered the check to a bank in Alcoy, they told me that they couldn't make it cash because the account had no funds. As I found out later, the house that had to make the costumes, which was "Bambalinas", refused to deliver them if there was no advance payment. No one charged there.

Precisely in October of the same year, and through the mediation of Pilar Toledo, the stupendous dressmaker from "Bambalinas", who had loved my designs, the director Fernando García de la Vega called me, and proposed me to design the costumes of a musical series, for television, that was going to be called "Antología de la Zarzuela". I worked with him for a long time. Adaptations of different zarzuelas were made, either by the author, by traditionalism, or by the musical themes. The first realization was the set of musical numbers from different zarzuelas: "El niño judío", "La chulapona", "El bateo", "El barquillero"... etc. The choreographer for the ballet was Alberto Portillo, principal dancer of the Spanish ballet and husband of Pilar Toledo.

The programs were broadcast once a week with the tune of "El tambor de Granaderos"

The director made a selection of different zarzuelas by maestro Jerónimo Jiménez, and in a program the number of the bathers from "El cinematógrafo nacional" was recorded. For the costumes I was inspired by a silent film by Max Senent. The zarzuela scene represents a cameraman shooting some shots of the corps de ballet, which I dressed in shades of blue and pale pink. Men's swimsuits with horizontal stripes and women's, with a hat, skirt and shorts.

The same program included "La gatita blanca", and in the number of the chocolatier, a role played by Rosa Valenti as the vedette, I dressed her in a spectacular red and black can-can dress. And to the two comedians, played by Luis Varela and Alfonso del Real, the dirty old men of the play, in black tailcoats.

Another program was "The wedding of Luis Alonso" and "The dance of Luis Alonso". For the dance academy scene, the tutu outfits were inspired by Degás's drawings of ballerinas. And the other characters with Andalusian folk costumes.

I made many sketches on the Andalusian costume, for the "Tempranica" and "La reina mora"

The big zarzuelas were also shot. For "Mrs. Francisquita", by Vives, it occurred to me to dress all the characters with different shades of violet.

María Kosti was Francisquita, Pedro Osinaga, the gallant Fernando; Norma Duval, represented the chulapa Aurora la Beltrana.

For the carnival scene, I made some drawings inspired by Goya's carnival. We went to Alberto Portillo's great clothing store and we chose the most disparate outfits. It was a success.

In "D. Gil de Alcalá", by maestro Penella, a large cast of actors participated: María Kosti, María Casal, Pedro Mena, Joaquín Kremer, Pedro Osinaga, José M<sup>a</sup> Cafarell. The action took place in colonial America in the 18th century. A story of paternity and love affairs. The design of the nun costumes was made according to some old engravings. Very suitable lingerie for the famous "Habanera", sung by "Niña Estrella" and swordsman and tropical costumes for the native scenes.

This was followed by "La Dogaresa", which took place in 14th century Venice in the Doge's palace. The protagonist was María José Suárez. Spectacular outfit for "Micone", the jester, and for the famous masked ball, I played with pastel tones,

that recalled the figures of Boticelli, and the costumes were complemented by golden masks.

Northern costumes for "Maruxa", with the "corozas" ballet, with their typical straw

costumes "La Alsaciana" by Jacinto Guerrero was also filmed. Drawings of military costumes from the 18th century and the feminine attire typical of Brittany, with a huge bow gathering the hair at the nape of the neck.

Then "El huésped del Sevillano", with costumes from the time of Felipe II, and the last zarzuela performed was "Luisa Fernanda", by Moreno Torroba, with María Kosti, María Silva and Rafael Gallardo. The action takes place in a Segovian town.

When this work was recorded, its author was still alive, and he was invited to witness the filming. He was amazed to see the shape and manner of staging his zarzuela. There were no natural voices, but "play-back", sometimes a romance would begin and the actor, who had not learned the lyrics, did not match the movements of the mouth with the music. Other times, they moved their lips and the song did not sound. The scene was divided into several sequences, and some takes had to be repeated up to seven times. In the end they had to give Moreno Torroba a cup of lime blossom.

All the zarzuelas were recorded in the "Roma" studios, which were in Fuencarral, a town near Madrid. They called us at eight in the morning, stage crews, electricians, stagehands, make-up artists, tailors, and naturally I had to be there to supervise the costumes and characterizations. The electricians began their assembly and distribution of lights –

That spotlight is too powerful! "The canyon to the left!" – You have to tint the red and blue lights! – And so, until boredom. At 12 the filming began, it was cut and it was started again. At one o'clock the vouchers for the dining room were distributed and the filming was suspended. They ate in the cafeteria and at three in the afternoon, they started again. Makeup artists, lights and wardrobe supervision. When they finished the working day, the work was considered as overtime, and every day the hours were extended. The word that was heard the most was, Cut! Cut, because the vocalization of the actress was not coupled with the playback. Cut, because one of the choir was scratching her nose. Cut, because in two windows with different angles of light, the sun was projected. Cut! Cut!

In 1978, Antonio Olano and Pepe Tamarit commissioned me again the costumes and sets for "Locos por la democracia", with music by García Morcillo. But on that occasion, Olano told us, that he had a great producer and we shouldn't worry about the economic issue. Everything was resolved.

The work began in the 1930s, went through the postwar period, to end in the incipient democracy. Karina, in the starring role and Carlos Díaz as the lead actor. It premiered with great success at the Alfil theater. But one day, Karina and Carlos did not attend the performance. They took with them the musical equipment including the loudspeakers. The two actors were replaced: by Nene Morales, who did not last long, and Luciana Wolf replaced her, and the male role, I don't remember who played it.

One day they called me to come to the theater office. Olano, told the secretary to issue me two checks, one dated April 30 and the other, "that it was cold," for May 30. I didn't know what a cold heel was, but it didn't look good to me. On the 30th I realized that the two checks had the same date, so I went to the bank, which was next to the Bishop, -I confess, with great suspicion- but, to my pleasant surprise, they paid me both .

As of May 1st, they blocked the account and then I found out what a “cold check” meant, –it seems like a joke– but it is that you are going to collect, and since there are no funds, you stay cold.



## CHAPTER IX

*You, who follow the flight of beauty, perhaps  
never ever thought how death rounds*

*jose iron*





At the end of 1975, on November 20, Franco died in the "La Paz" hospital. His mortal remains were exposed to the public in the Royal Palace and the queues that were organized to visit the burning chapel were impressive. From Plaza de Oriente, Calle del Arenal, Sol, Cibeles, Calle Alcalá, Plaza de la Independencia and El Retiro, people lined up for two and three days to parade before Franco's corpse.

I had arranged an exhibition with the Estil Gallery in Valencia, which I inaugurated on March 6, 1976, with great critical and public acclaim.

In this exhibition, one of the incentives was to meet again with the close friends that we had left on our way to Madrid. With the musician Paco Llácer and his wife Carmen Peris, who were united by a brotherly friendship; with Alfonso Gil-Albors, –friend and countryman– and Mari Ángeles, his wife, –I remember, those days at the beginning of television, when we would meet at the house of Mari Ángeles' parents, and we made bets on who would be the winner, in those famous song festivals–. With the journalist and always a friend, Mari Ángeles Arazo; with Salvador Chanzá and Pepa, his wife; and friends from Alcoy, already residing in Valencia, Pepe Gisbert and Amparo. With all the dear Valencian friends, members of our rock "Bona Nit".

Now, while I am writing and reviewing an album of photographs and press clippings, I see myself at that inauguration with the Taberner couple, –owners of the gallery–; with Ismael, manager and friend; with Antonia Mir and Matilde Salvador; with Juan Garces; and the friends from Alcoy who came to accompany us that night: Julia and Tono Aracil, Paqui and Pepe Pascual; my brothers-in-law Raquel and Rafael Botella, and my father-in-law who came with them from Alcoy, and my nephew – Rafita was a kid then, now he is a great dermatologist, family man. So many friends were with us!

But I also relive difficult hours of excessive work: at 9 in the morning I had class at the branch, at 11:30 in Barreira, at 3, again at the branch until five, at 7, in Barreira and from 9:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., the night of the Subsidiary. In my house I painted, Saturdays and Sundays and still gave me time to exhibit. Those were heroic times, something that I would not have been able to do without Pepa. When my son was little, he almost didn't know me because I practically didn't live with him, he said: Dad no, dad no! I thought his rejection was due to my beard, and I shaved my beard. But, truly, perhaps it was that, what induced me to sign the oppositions.

I remember, when we took the kid to the nursery school in Viveros, if one day I could pick him up, we would return along the Paseo de Valencia al Mar, and his great hobby was cars, he was three years old but he knew all the brands, and he would say, as he saw them : "O-pel", "Se-at", "fur-go-ne-ta", "four-four"... and caught the attention of a parking attendant, who asked: the child, so small, already know how to read? Sometimes he would say, "ornate tailpipe," but this, although I've asked him now, I don't know what he meant, and neither does he.

Some Sunday mornings, after breakfast, Pepa would make us a sandwich and the boy and I would go on an excursion. -he always had a truck or a car pulled by a rope-, we would go to the "Cañaveral" and sometimes to the narrow-gauge train, the Liria train, which so many memories, do not

nice, had to myself. We put pesetas or nails on the rails and waited for the arrival of the train. When in the distance we heard the whistle, we withdrew, and I told him, "You look where the coins go." After the convoy passed, we dedicated ourselves to searching among the stones, since the thrust of the train made them fly and how the nails and pesetas remained! What small shapes they acquired when they were crushed by the wheels!

It was a real pity, that he couldn't get the place in Valencia. For us, Valencia occupies a preferential place in our hearts. It was our second exile, the first from Alcoy, and then from Valencia.

All the press covered the exhibition. In the "Monday Sheet" Rafael Alfaro said:

*Ramón Castañer displays a select sample of his pictorial work with a series of oil paintings and "gouaches" in which an excellent drawing and a chosen range of colors can be appreciated. The oil paintings, between impressionism and realism, are effectively supported by various poetic resonances that the artist transfers to the canvas with all his emotion. Figure and composition are the themes addressed by Castañer, who shows off authentic preciousness in his precise brushstrokes and in the wise dosage of colour. The impressionist line is the one that prevails in the "gouaches", with whose technique he has made various and beautiful landscapes.*

Mari Ángeles Arazo, in "Las Provincias" wrote, in three consecutive days, "The Life and Work of Ramón Castañer". From those articles I collect his portrait, because I don't know how to talk about myself.

*It is easy to describe Ramón Castañer as a tall and strong man who, in any part of the world, would be assumed to be Arab before Spanish; however, it is complex to reflect his humanity, so dense with humor and tenderness. Maybe he tells you a joke with his characteristic mimicry, which surprises you with an observation where the most subtle poetry emerges.*

*We are united by a friendship of time and sincerity, strengthened in the dialogue that transcends beyond the anecdote, to the confrontation of ideas and feelings...*

*Ramón Castañer, a painter wherever there are: –art is not pure chance, it is an incessant search, sensitivity and study in favor of a creation–, he is above all a being dedicated to those around him, a man who loves to live through wife, mother, son, friends. And, furthermore, he happily confesses it, looking into his eyes with those of his, black, penetrating. –And if not, what is life? What's the point? –.*

*–I am a man of asphalt, I even like to travel by subway at "rush" hours. I don't mind the smell of humanity. It doesn't bother me to go side by side with a being that may never come across again in my life. I observe the hands, the mouths, the eyes. I observe the gesture of the jaded and the happy; of the rebellious, of the apathetic... I am painting mentally. And yet, I am able to isolate myself in a meeting that does not interest me*

At the beginning of 1977 I met Maite Muñoz in Madrid, who ran an art gallery in Barcelona. He offered me to hold an exhibition there and we arranged it for the month of November. I opened on the 21st and closed on December 5th.

On Radio Barcelona, in the space "Revista de la tarde" commented Lina Font:

*Reappearance in Barcelona, of the Levantine painter Castañer.*

*Yes. We say comeback because a few years ago – 1952—Castañer held his first personal exhibition in our city. And since then, if we remember correctly, he has not shown us his work, splendid and cleanly executed.*

*He returns, now, with a wide baggage of oil paintings inserted in the most current concepts of the new realism...*

The exhibition was highly visited and was covered by "El Noticiero Universal"; "The vanguard"; "El Diario de Barcelona", which said:

*With the faithful reflection on the canvas of the various motifs that populate the solitudes and animations of domestic interiors bathed in the order of intimacy, Ramón Castañer, once again present on the Barcelona scene after a long exhibition silence, with virtuoso precision of manufacture invites the viewer to the contemplation of a work protected by the most valid of traditional realistic painting, not nineteenth-century, inquiring with merit of the beauty and serenity that can be found in everyday life... .*

And, in the "World of Art", a comment by Francesc Gali, (which is collected in the chapter dedicated to Press).

The decade of the 70s was prolific in exhibitions and, again, in March 1978, I exhibited in Alcoy, in the Capitol gallery.

My spirit, always restless, made me paint passionately, which does not mean hasty.

For me size has always been an important factor.

Since I am big in size, I need my paintings to have dimensions to be able to get inside. If I have a theme, I have a work. I have always developed in my mind the thematic composition. I have been elaborating and I have mentally solved what I wanted to paint. If, at some point, I was not pleased, I felt a kind of natural, innate rejection of the subject. I would abandon it, and forget about it, until another composition took the place of my desire. Once accepted, theme, composition and development, I no longer care about anything, I know I have work.

Sometimes, I start to paint, without wanting to, but little by little, a silent dialogue is established between the painting and me, and the work envelops you, making that advice come true, which I don't know who gave: "When the inspiration, that I find you working".

Sometimes it takes me months to solve an issue. I'm going around the matter, I see the work, but I can't find the solution, until the moment arrives when you get it right with that "something", which "is". Then I park the work in my mind, waiting for the moment to be able to do it.

It also often happens to me that when I am painting in the studio in Madrid, physically and mentally, my psyche accepts the situation. The space, the light, the surroundings, the objects, the sirens of the ambulances, the street noise of the cars and the music of "radio 2", form a set that help me to work. –The composer "Varese" has a work, "Amérique", which precisely narrates that merriment musically–.

Then comes summer. The transfer to Agres, and everything disappears, sirens, firefighters, street workers, even the light is different, and then I have a recoupling phase. I haven't found myself for several days. The silence of the countryside, which is, like a heavy slab, the singing of the birds, the cicadas, soft and monotonous, the sunlight from the north, the day grown until ten at night, everything alters my rhythm of work, and I need time to adjust to the new space. The bad thing is that this process is cyclical, and the same thing happens to me when I get back to Madrid.

From this exhibition, from 1978, a commentary by Adrián Espí titled "The Lyricism of a world that is dying out" appeared in "City", which is reproduced in the chapter dedicated to "Press". And Mari Ángeles Arazo in "Provinces" of Valencia, said: *Good news from friends comforts. I recently received the catalog for the Ramón Castañer exhibition at the Capitol Gallery in Alcoy (...). The poetic realism of his oil paintings reaches the public, and the distant evocation of a time that is gone; a warm, loving, family time, of childhood lost in almanac sheets, captive. From the suitcases and the silk parasol, to the naked woman in front of an ewer with linen towels and long fringes (...).*

The house made a reproduction of this oil painting, to which Mari Ángeles refers. "Metalcris", on a metal plate, in the collection of painters from Alcoy.

For me the human figure has been an important component. In the large spaces of the various murals, the human and archangelic figures have been a challenge, but never a problem. And after not representing a body for so long, I felt the need to capture a female figure. I saw the theme in a female nude. I looked for a model and made a gouache sketch. I sat the woman with her back to the light, in front of a window covered by curtains, combing her hair in front of a washbasin with a mirror, in which her arms are reflected, holding up her hair.

Naturally, the theme required a good canvas size. I have never liked to dwarf the figure. I think that by combining it into small pictures it loses its representative force. Perhaps the matter arises from the large figural proportions of my works in the temples, where the spaces open up to perceive the composition.

Perhaps it would be in 1978, we received the catalog for an exhibition in Madrid, by Vicente Moya, whom I had had as a student in Alcoy. We did not know the "Art Gallery 16" and we went to the opening. We congratulated the painter and met Vicente Cerdá who was the owner of the gallery. In the conversation, Cerdá asked Pepa if she would like to run the gallery. Pepa gladly accepted and thus a new phase began in our life in Madrid. The venue was spacious. A large ground floor dedicated to framing paintings, reproductions and sale of fine art materials attended by Carlos Gervasini, and a first floor for an exhibition hall.

Pepa managed to create a true artistic environment and between her and Carlos, they got a clientele of nice people who already formed social gatherings. Pepa knew how to treat with exquisiteness, and the critics were regulars at the exhibitions, García Viñolas, Mario Antolín, Figuerola Ferreti, Campoy...

Naturally, I exhibited in the gallery, in March 1980. The catalog had a presentation by Agustín Andreu Rodrigo, and four independent plates with reproductions of my works and behind each one, a different comment by: AM Campoy, Adrián Espí, MA García Viñolas and Fernando Gutiérrez.

Pepa knew how to organize the exhibition very well and it was a resounding success. All the Madrid press took care of reviewing my work in criticism and comments. García Viñolas and Mario Antolín did it in "Pueblo"; Figuerola Ferreti, in the magazine "Goya"; Julia Sáez-Angulo, in the magazine "Crítica de Arte"; in "ABC", M. R Lara, and in the magazine "Guadalimar", José María Iglesias. (Presentation and comments are reproduced in the Press chapter)

In the "Imparcial", Antonio D. Olano, wrote a note regarding the exhibition that said: **"A miracle**

**called Ramón Castañer"**

He is from **Alcoy** and his name is **Ramón Castañer**. His name appears, almost weekly, as a sketch artist for the costumes that are worn in the **zarzuelas** on TV. In Valencia he became fond of theater, collaborating with the **Chamber Theater**.



*"Torerillo in Triana". 180 x 100 cm. Private Col. Marbella*

*Now, after two years of uninterrupted work, Castañer is presented to us in Madrid ("Galería de Arte 16"). If we had to find a match for him, we would immediately have to think of Antonio López, a "seed head" among the Spanish of universal quote. Hyperrealism? Just paint. The hyperrealists use and abuse acrylic, a material that Dalí asks to be eradicated from plastic. Castañer paints in oil.*

*In the 16 of Diego de León, within the frenzy of "shows" that invade Madrid, an authentic plastic spectacle is offered. If the briefcase appeared, surely the males of that little bag would be tied, for rent, that in that room of the town pension waits for the "cloak". Bravo!*

Like every year, we prepared our trip to Alcoy to spend Christmas. Here in Madrid my mother stayed with my aunt Amanda and a girl, Mari, who had been at home for many years. We left on the morning of the 24th and on Christmas Day, when we called to congratulate them, my aunt told me that my mother had a cold. On the 26th, she called us to tell us that my mother had gotten worse and they were scared. We immediately set off back to Madrid. When we arrived we found her with a bad cold, but she looked fine and had no fever. She told us that she wanted to get up, but since it was already very late, we agreed that we would get her up the next day. At 7 in the morning, the aunt knocked on our bedroom door and told us that she couldn't hear my mother breathing. We got up and sure enough, my mother had passed away. Just like that, without anything else, as if a candle had been blown out.

It was Sunday, and things rushed. We called the doctor, who certified his death. The priest from our parish came and we processed the paperwork at the funeral home. My mother never thought that she would live in Madrid or that she would die here. Her life was always linked to Alcoy, but the circumstances, which she had already accepted, were the cause of her body resting, since December 29, 1980, in the Madrid cemetery of Nuestra Señora de la Almudena.

At the end of December 1981, "La Clave", a film about the "Beatles", titled "What a night that day!" –by Richard Lester–, and the theme was the history of the formation of the group, then at the height of its fame.

We used to stay to see the film and, generally, to the talks, which were almost always very suggestive. I remember that day perfectly because there are dates that cannot be erased, we went to bed late, and I woke up at half past four in the morning, feeling unwell. Nothing hurt, but I felt discomfort. I got up to the bathroom, not turning on the bedroom light, just the soft glow coming through the slits in the blinds. I turned on the light in the bathroom and when I saw my image in the mirror, I got scared, seeing myself so emaciated. Pepa had woken up, and I told her that I was feeling unwell. I lay down on the bed, while she went out to look for some remedy. The feeling I experienced was somewhat implausible.

It seemed to me that they were throwing me into a deep space through which I was going down dizzily. In that glide through space, something split in two inside me. One part realized that this could be the end, but the other part, my "I", was struggling to get out of that state, from that situation. I listened to Pepa's voice, giving me water and a few drops of Coramina, -we had that medication at home, when my father-in-law came over.

When the emergency doctor arrived, whom Pepa, a young boy, had notified, I had already recovered and felt that life was flowing again. He listened to me, and asked me if I had felt oppression or pain in my chest, and when I refused, he took my blood pressure, which was very low, 6-2, and told us that it looked like a possible heart attack, but if I repeated the previous painting, we called and an ambulance would send us, and if nothing happened, we told the family doctor. he prescribed me "Cafinitrina", which my son immediately went looking for.

The next day, the family doctor came, examined me, repeated the same questions, and told me that it had been a digestion cut, -a bit of diet and rest- and when I felt better, to come by the office to ask me. an electrocardiogram and a blood test.

To all this, I already had the Christmas holidays, and the plans to go to Alcoy. I called my brother-in-law, the doctor Rafael Botella, and told him to arrange a visit with a cardiologist for me. He did so, and as soon as I arrived I went to see Octavio Terol, who gave me an electro, which came back negative, and Juan Fluviá, my good friend Juan, did the blood test. When I went to pick him up, he told me: "Ramón, you're fine, but when you go to Madrid, go see a good cardiologist."

We spent Christmas, New Year's Eve and Epiphany. We did not have to return soon, because my mother was no longer alive. So, back in Madrid, I asked my good friend Domingo Espinós for a consultation, who examined me and also advised me to visit a heart specialist. And I went to see D. Julián Piñeiro Zabaleta, who did another examination, electrocardiogram and tests, and confirmed that there was a heart lesion due to a severe heart attack. And since then, continued medication and periodic visits began. And may they last for many years!

In the eighties, Mari Ángeles Irún, the wife of Juan Alfonso Gil-Albors, ran an art gallery in Valencia, "Galería Zeta". He contacted me to propose an exhibition, which we agreed to do in May 1982.

I presented a collection of oil paintings, with the theme that I used at that time, works with a great drawing, a somewhat dreamlike expression in the compositions, and a color without violence, sifted with nostalgic nuances. There was a novelty in that exhibition. A collection of drawings made with the technique of wax. Head studies of old women with flaky skin, and bronze-faced sailors.

Our dear friend, Mari Ángeles Arazo, made the presentation of the event, and once again, the Valencian press covered my presentation. They said in the "Critique" of "Las Provincias": *Castañer's*

*painting is always unique and exceptional; forms a real entity, according to an expressive ideal. It has creative intuition; compositions immobilized in their expressive mission. They are creations whose raison d'être lies in themselves and whose environment is modeled by absolutely singular imperatives.*

*Formal expression, concrete and extensive, but, at the same time, indecipherable.*

*Violent desires materialized, unknown and mysteriously, in some compositions where the theme is only a pretext to make a plastic poetry of lyrical content.*

*Every day the interest aroused by these attitudes and artistic aptitudes is greater in contemporary Spanish visual arts, which decisively integrate the horizon of contemporary realism. The pictorial qualities of his textures reveal his flexibility and all-encompassing professionalism. to the forms*

*Impeccable Castañer adds the weight of the language of color, which is one more quality, because he uses it with mastery and talent.*

The poet, Matilde Lloria, dedicated a poem to one of my works. A painting in the that a pile of dry, autumnal, withered leaves appears on a snowy ground.

### **leaves on snow**

(oil painting by Ramón Castañer)

There are leaves that do not die. They are saved from dust and loneliness; of the aggressive gale that scatters and tests its rolling and long-suffering resistance.

They are saved from all the oblivions that tend to erase the wild streak of their first brilliance. He surrounds them paternally... They beat whispering wild names: forests, calming seas of caressing grass, and they, --oases of stillness--, put into orbit the calm of a message of concord.

There are leaves with a memory of silence that inflames their stealthy voices and tell of the sadness of the trees that cry, when they break away from them.

Leaves whose beauty contemplates us with its green pupil from the air and sometimes, from the ground, on snow, with the warm flame of its fire, and an intertwined "always", conquered leaf by leaf until it becomes center and edge.

And the soul does not get tired of looking at them when time has passed like a river through the happy forehead. She remembers as if it were a nest, that leaf litter surrounded by jasmine, -I say snow-, as if she were saying light from some miracle.

Matilde Lloria

In December 1981, the "I Meeting of Young Emigrants from Europe" was held in Madrid, the events were held in the "youth hostel" in the Casa de Campo. Various events had been organized and one of them was a colloquium



on current Spanish poetry. They invited a well-known poet for the act, but this gentleman did not attend, without giving reasons. One of the organizers was the brother of a classmate of mine at the Institute, the professor of French, Fernando Tato, and his brother asked him if he had the possibility that someone could replace this poet. Fernando, who knew about Pepa's work at Simancas, called her, begging her to get him out of that commitment, and off we went Pepa and I.

Dialogue was difficult in that cold hostel, but Pepa knew how to establish human warmth and poetic contact with that second generation of children of emigrants. The spirits were lit and Spanish boys who came from different places: England, France, Germany, even from Poland, spoke, recited and were enthusiastic when Pepa told them some poems.

They asked Pepa to take our cultural message – I had performed with the bongos – to the different centers of emigration, since these messages were always carried by Spanish dance folkloric groups. We thought they were just words in the wind.

In March 1983, we received a very nice letter from Kassel, so that we participated with our performance, in the "1 Poetry and Narrative Contest"

The request came from the "Federal Coordinator of the Associative Movement of Spanish Emigrants in Germany" and the (FAJA) Federation of Youth and Student Associations. They included the planned itinerary for us to give a series of recitals in various cities in Germany.

"I don't think," they said, "that it is necessary to repeat our admiration and our gratitude for the beautiful recital they gave us in December 1981, where 40 young emigrants, who barely understand Spanish, were left wanting to continue listening to poetry. We fervently hope that you please us and agree to bring us that important part of Spanish Culture as Poetry is."

The organization was perfect. We left Madrid on June 1st for Frankfurt and the director of the Casa de España, Elpidio Rubio, and Vicente Ballester, whom we already knew from the recital in Madrid, came out to receive us. The first performance was on the 2nd at the IEE Salón de la Casa de España. It was a resounding success. Pepa with her warm voice, kind gesture, with a big heart knew how to win over the large audience, who at the end applauded with true enthusiasm.

It was an exhausting tour. After Frankfurt, Hanau followed, Kassel, Hannover, Göttingen, Hamburg, Dortmund, Remscheid, Aachen, Bonn, and Nuremberg.

In all places they presented her with flowers, gifts and took us to visit museums, castles and monuments, they tried by all means to make our stay pleasant.

On the 5th, the recital was at the Casa de España in Hannover, and the following day we held a discussion on theater and poetry with the theater group directed by Jesús Carretero. The colloquium focused on the declamation and aspects of the staging of theatrical works, decorations, costumes and stage productions.

In Göttingen, the recital was held in a classroom at the University, with a large audience: emigrants, German Spanish students, and South Americans.

In Hamburg many people attended the recital as it was promoted by the poetic gathering "El Butacón", "founded in 1976 in Hamburg to keep the Indo-Iberian languages alive in emigration". It was directed by Nono Carrillo and they organized a tribute for us in which, after dinner, they gave us a scroll that reads *"In homage to Pepa and Ramón Castañer, messengers from Spain for their great performance. Hamburg, June 10, 1983"*.

The German Hispanist Hans Karflchmiche also dedicated a few written words to us in which he says *"To Pepa de Castañer and Ramón Castañer, thanking them wholeheartedly for the evening of Hispanic poetry, which took me back to days gone by, evoking the images of Dámaso Alonso, José Hierro, Salinas and Federico García Lorca, whom I met many, many years ago"*.

The trip was tiring but positive. We made a report, of which we delivered a copy to the General Directorate of Youth and another to the Spanish Institute of Emigration, since both entities had collaborated on our trip. We also delivered two copies, one for the FAJA and the other for the Federal Coordinator in Germany, which had been organized. Pepa had such success in these recitals that Jesús Carretero and

Vicente Ballester once again requested a new performance by Pepa in Germany. For this second occasion, she prepared a tribute to Antonio Machado, Federico García Lorca and Miguel Hernández. Here I had no place as a "bongonsero", but I made a musical recording that accompanied the poems, and they included me as a musical technician. A festival of the emigrant theater groups was also organized on this occasion, and a poetry contest, a copy of which was sent to us in Madrid so that we could rate the poems.

The first Festival of Spanish Theater in RFA was held in Kassel on October 25, 26 and 27, 1985. Pepa and I had been appointed juries, as well as Lauro Olmo and his wife. On October 24 we met at the Barajas airport and we made the trip together and they put us up at the same hotel in Kassel.

The "Youth Club" of Kassel presented the work of Carlos Llopis, "We, they and the duende"; the "Friends of the Theater" by Remscheid, "The boat without a fisherman" by Casona; the "Ludwischafen Theater Group" had prepared "History of the Abandoned Doll" by Sastre; the "Minden Theater Group", the "Molinera de Arcos" from Casona; the "Frankfurt Theater Group", Casona's "Fablilla del secreto bien guardado"; "Candilejas" by Ludwigsburg, "Only one night" by Monteagudo; the "Theater Group, Accra" from Aachen, "Square to Death" by Sastre; the "Theatrical Group of the CC of Frankfurt", "Return to the country" of the group itself; and the "Popular Theater of Hannover", "Aquí no paga nadie" by Darío Fo.

They were very interesting days due to the variety of themes, styles and interpretations, and it was exciting to see the effort and enthusiasm of the different groups that allowed us to live with them.

Pepa and I had connected very well with the Olmo couple, and in our free time we would go out together to tour the city, visit museums, monuments and typical places.

Pepa had asked the organizers for her tour to have fewer performances, to have a few days to get to know the cities on your itinerary.

The first recital in Kassel was given on the 27th in the afternoon. Hannover on the 30th, and then Hamburg, Bielefeld, Remscheid, Aachen, Frankfurt. Until November 10, which was our return. The people were excited. I remember at the Bielefeld recital a spectator who in a burst of enthusiasm went up on stage and hugged Pepa crying. And precisely from there, on January 19, 1986, we received a letter from Heliodoro Galán, secretary of the Bielefeld Spanish Center, which said:

*Dear Pepa and Ramón:*

*When the echoes of your recital still floated in the hall of our Center, the members, meeting in a general assembly at the end of last December, unanimously agreed to name you honorary members of our organization, which this year celebrated its 20th anniversary.*

*The proposal was made by our partner, former president and new poet, Miguel Moreno, and supported by all of us who feel and carry poetry and our poets inside.*

*For me it is a satisfaction to be the notifier of this first case of awarding Members of Honor, fully justified in you by the affection you put and the noble dedication to keep our CULTURE alive in the Spanish emigration.*

*Here you have left many friends.  
A hug and goodbye.*

The letter was signed by the President and the Secretary of the Center.

At the end of this same year we made a third trip to Germany. On this occasion, organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the General Directorate of the IEE, the Labor Attaché Office of the Spanish Embassy in Bonn, and the Houses of Spain in Frankfurt, Hannover and München, and in commemoration of the "VIII Anniversary of the Spanish Constitution of 1978". The events were organized with a lecture by Dr. M. Tuñón de Lara, on "The transition to democracy: the Constitution of 1978" on December 6 and from the 7th, Pepa's poetry recitals, on Christmas poems.

The recitals were accompanied by a slide show relating to each poem and musical accompaniment. Our itinerary was from Frankfurt, to Hannover, München, Cologne, Bonn, Essen, Braunscheig, and Darmstadt.

We arrived in Spain on December 20, just in time to prepare for Christmas. In Germany we left many friends.

For my painting these trips were extraordinary. I came across a world that I knew through cinema or illustrations, but personal contact gives you a different way of assimilating things, the people, the landscape. I made a lot of notes, of urban landscapes with typical German houses, and the countryside so full of vegetation different from ours, filtered with a greyish green color made up of numerous eucalyptus forests, -trees that the new German regime, after the In the last war, they repopulated the mountains and slopes, although later they realized that the places where eucalyptus trees grow are aseptic so that no other plant or animal element can reproduce. The light so different from ours. The sun rises very early, at five in the morning there is already sun, and at four in the afternoon the stars are already shining.

I got to know German expressionist painting directly, and we visited many museums founded by Karl Ernst Osthaus, the patron who, with his cultural and social responsibility, wanted to house the painters from before the First World War, in large museums.

I got to know the painting of the artists that made up the group "Die Brücke", (The Bridge). At first the ideal of this group were Van Gogh and Munch, but the lines of the Dresden painters were more robust, and their range of colors, more fiery and aggressive. Artists such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Eric Herkel, Karl Schmidt and others painted with great force, figures, nudes indoors or outdoors, circus and theater scenes, still lifes and landscapes.

In 1933 the German dictatorship began to suppress this type of art, as a free realization of itself and the artists were soon deprived of exhibiting their works, since their painting was classified as schizophrenic expression, and was officially considered as "degenerate art".

The recovery after the war had to start slowly, rewarding the already old artists of the avant-garde, and supporting the young to re-incorporate Germany into current European art.

We also got to know the works of the expressionists: Nolde, Christian Rohlf, Oscar Kokoschka, Max Bechmann, and the painters of the association called "Der Blaue Reiter", (The Blue Rider), Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Paul Klee...

From the integration of architecture and abstract art, creative education arose that linked the configuration of the environment with the life of modern man.

This is how the "Bauhaus" group emerged, headed by Piet Mondrian, and followed by Oscar Schlemmer and Willi Baumeister.

When visiting museums we tried to go alone, but it was very pleasant to visit monuments accompanied by a young emigrant who served us as an interpreter and guide. Thus, we got to know Frankfurt, with Klaus, Pilar's husband, a member of Comisiones Obreras. It was awesome. Klaus loved his city and he knew how to convey it. They took us to eat in one of those typical places, with long wooden tables and long benches, where they sing and drink good beer.

Kassel, we met with Vicente Ballester, who, of course, took us to visit the famous "Hercules", the stepped hill with fountains, gardens and waterfalls that come from its top with the great stone temple and the great figure of Hercules in bronze.

We toured the city of Hannover with Jorge Laguardia, an emigrant who had been in Germany for many years and was considered an artist, sculptor and decorator. He took us to see the ultramodern sculptures installed in various streets.

Avant-garde sculptures painted in bright colors, like the famous "tetudas".

And then, he invited us to eat at a Mexican restaurant that he had decorated, where we tasted the spiciest food we had ever tasted.

One of those young people you don't forget was Nahum, he was a social worker, kind, discreet, educated, with him we visited the Alterbergen monastery and the castle, we traveled to Cologne to see the cathedral. That Gothic mountain, which leaves you breathless before the majesty of its forms. With him we sailed down the Rhine, and he took us to Solingen and Wuppertal, to see and ride the single-rail aerial tramway.

In Aachen, (Aquisgran), it was Carmen Coutón, who belonged to the coordinator, our guide to visit the cathedral, the Charlemagne treasure, the Three Kings chest, the town hall and the typical articulated fountains.

Three trips to Germany, at different times, give many notes. During the hours of waiting on the station platforms, I drew pictures of boring people, sitting on suitcases, reading the newspaper, sleeping, having a sandwich.

Indifferent, those who look at the schedules, those who leave, those who enter, a whole world that there, between loudspeakers that launch indications of arrival and departure, swarmed like crazy merriment. Notes that now I look at and remember that, as if I had been Josué and the sun had stopped and I had kept time with the images, between the graphite of my pencils and the lines of the markers.

## CHAPTER X

*To you, flax in the field. To you, extended  
surface, to the waiting eyes.*

*To you, imagination cold or bonfire,  
faithful design or flame ungirdled.*

*Raphael Alberti*





1987; 2 x 1.30m; alcoy

In the summer of 1986, our friends, Tito Pastor, a friend since our high school days, and his wife, Amalia Morán, were at the Agres farmhouse. In the course of our conversations –distant and recent memories– the topic of organizing an anthological exhibition of my painting appeared. The idea seemed fine to me, but what was really a stumbling block for me was the part dedicated to practicing public relations. It is something that has always resisted me. I've never been good at it, and I've always left such matters to Pepa. But that day, my good friend Tito, with the cachaza that has always characterized him, told me: "Well, you'll see. Let me do it. I'll do some business and when I know something, I'll let you know." So it was. He went to the CAM, spoke with Julio Laporta and Baldomero Satorre, presented the idea, there they

It seemed great and this was the beginning of the Anthological Exhibition "40 years of painting, 1947-1987".

And I started with the selective topic, what works could appear? Logically, I had in the studio works from my beginnings in painting, from my days in San Carlos, from my military service in Tetuán. I usually keep works from all periods of my painting, but I had to ask for some paintings that for me were representative of a pictorial moment. For example, the CAM had my work, figurative and abstract, but others were outside of Alcoy. I spoke with the owners of the paintings and no one made any difficulties for me. With the van from the Savings Bank, we collected the works, both from private collections and from official centers and I think we got a good exhibition, I was satisfied. A total of 66 oil paintings and, apart from that, several temperas with illustrations, both for stories and for costume sketches for RTV's "Antología de la Zarzuela".

We distribute the work in two rooms. In the smallest, I placed my first works: a still life from 1947, the cloister of San Carlos (Valencia), from 1948, a self-portrait from 1949; a 117 x 114 cm painting, "The Bullfighter's Widow", from 1950; the first portrait I did of Pepa and another of her sister, both 56 x 47 cm...

In the large room I grouped the oil paintings into periods, using additional panels and easels, thus I gathered the portraits, works on African themes, the Paris period, the abstract, the series of creation, the series of trees, works on poems: "Sleepwalking Romance", "Masereta, masereta que a les festes d'Alcoy vens", "Tribute to Yvonne de Carlo", It was inaugurated on

December 9, 1987. In the splendid catalog published by CAM, there were two literary collaborations, one by Antonio Revert, "Un consumado maestro", and the other, by Adrián Espí, "Castañer, muralist painter".

The "Klee" laboratory recorded an interesting video, taking a tour of the entire exhibition, with text by Adrián Miró and Pepa's voice.

(The two presentations in the catalog are included in the section dedicated to the press, as is an extensive comment by Román de la Calle.)

On December 31, in "City", in the commentary of "Galerías y Exhibitions", said "Apeles"

### **An unrepeatable anthology, that of Ramón**

**Castañer** *First of all we must congratulate the artist, of course, but congratulations go ahead too, and with the same intensity, for the Caja de Ahorros de Alicante and Murcia, for the assembly and for serving as a stage to a collection as superb as the one that has been offered to us.*

*Indeed: Ramón Castañer Segura has been a painter for forty years – he was already before 1947 – and after such a long time he has shown –like few or very few of our artists- an evolution and a constant concern for change and finding paths, all of them They are also valid and in full force at all times, times and circumstances.*

*Figuration, romanticism, lyrical abstraction, realism that apparently tends towards "hyperrealism" but which, in essence, is not, consolidating itself simply and simply as an enthusiastic and sensitive, loquacious and beautiful naturalism...*

*Beauty – that is the word – beauty seen and interpreted from many points of view and different sensations. Castañer is a well-rounded painter, as an illustrator –really out of the ordinary– extraordinary, an exquisite draughtsman. And words continue to emerge: exquisiteness, sweetness, solidity.*



*Ramón Castañer's work is that constant, it is firm, it is beautiful, it is human, it has and maintains a message, truth, philosophy and aestheticism. His aesthetic –another word and another concept– is not pure circus balance; it is poetic and magical sensibility, whatever the time and moment of its creation. Castañer is, in essence, an absolute and plural creator.*

*The best exhibition, without a doubt, carried out by a living and valid painter from Alcoy.*



*Don Bosco wall. Mary Help of Christians Alcoy. 200 m<sup>2</sup> , 1988*

#### The mural of San Juan Bosco

At the beginning of 1988, the Salesian Work was preparing to celebrate the first centenary of the death of San Juan Bosco, and in Alcoy, where the Salesian school is deeply rooted, a series of events throughout the year. The proclamation that opened that anniversary was given by the Archbishop of Madrid, D.

Enrique Tarancon. And it was thought that I would make a large commemorative mural on the altar of D. Bosco, in the church of María Auxiliadora in Alcoy, where I had already painted another mural dedicated to San Pancracio, in the 50s. At that time I was director of the Salesians D. Angel del Barrio, an extraordinary person, with great sensitivity, sympathy, and a good job for everyone. When D. Ángel arrived in Alcoy and saw the mural of San Pancracio –according to what he told me–, he was very impressed, and he transmitted to the organizing committee, also counting on the collaboration of the group of alumni, the idea that I was the to paint the mural He phoned me in Madrid, explaining the idea to me. I loved the subject, because I have already said that large spaces are what truly attract me. He sent me documentation, a book on the life of Don Bosco, and various photos. I made some sketches on large cardboard, and distributed them in several scenes in the large 200-square-meter space. On the part of the roof, that of the spherical cap, a sky

with the figure of the Holy Spirit. In the middle of a great Archimedean spiral formed by clouds, which were enveloping a circle of male and female angels. These showed, in their movements and contortions, the splendor of their semi-naked bodies entwined by the hands, forming a large central crown.

For the left part, that of the gospel, some representations of the Salesian activities in Alcoy. The traditional procession of María Auxiliadora on May 24, as it passes through the now-defunct Santo Domingo street, where hangings and blankets were placed covering the ironwork of the balconies. Since I couldn't represent the street, I imagined a large canopy that would cover the Virgin, made up of damask bedspreads and silks supported by angels. The Virgin, Mary Help of Christians, on the litter, carried by former students of the school, altar boys with candles and children dressed for communion taking the silk ribbons that came out of the litter.

In another scene: the soccer team, "Atlético Salesiano", lined up to take a photo, with the players dressed in their colors, a red shirt and black shorts. In the center, the goalkeeper with a trophy in his hands and completing the group, a Salesian cleric. Unifies the scene, a photographer from the 40s, a camera with a tripod, and a "collage" of photos displayed on the sides, who takes the photo, a memory of the day. From above, a large maroon canvas frames the composition, like a curtain held by angels, which closes the space, with the emblems of the school theater group.

On the right side, that of the epistle, the space was also divided into two scenes: a portrait of Don Bosco, seated in his office, with a covered table and a friar armchair, and the staging of a dream he had: A boat with children, many children, and among clouds Dominic Savio, white tunic and wide red sash, with a bouquet of lilies in his arms.

Later, the scene of the death of the saint. When D. Bosco died, he was exposed seated in an armchair, covered in a chasuble and liturgical vestments, with a crucifix in his hands. And so I represented him, guarded by three funerary Atlantean angels. One of them, carrying the soul of the saint, emulating El Greco in the famous burial of the Count of Orgaz. Closing the set is a large cloth, hung from the heights, in leaden tones, symbolizing Jacob's ladder.

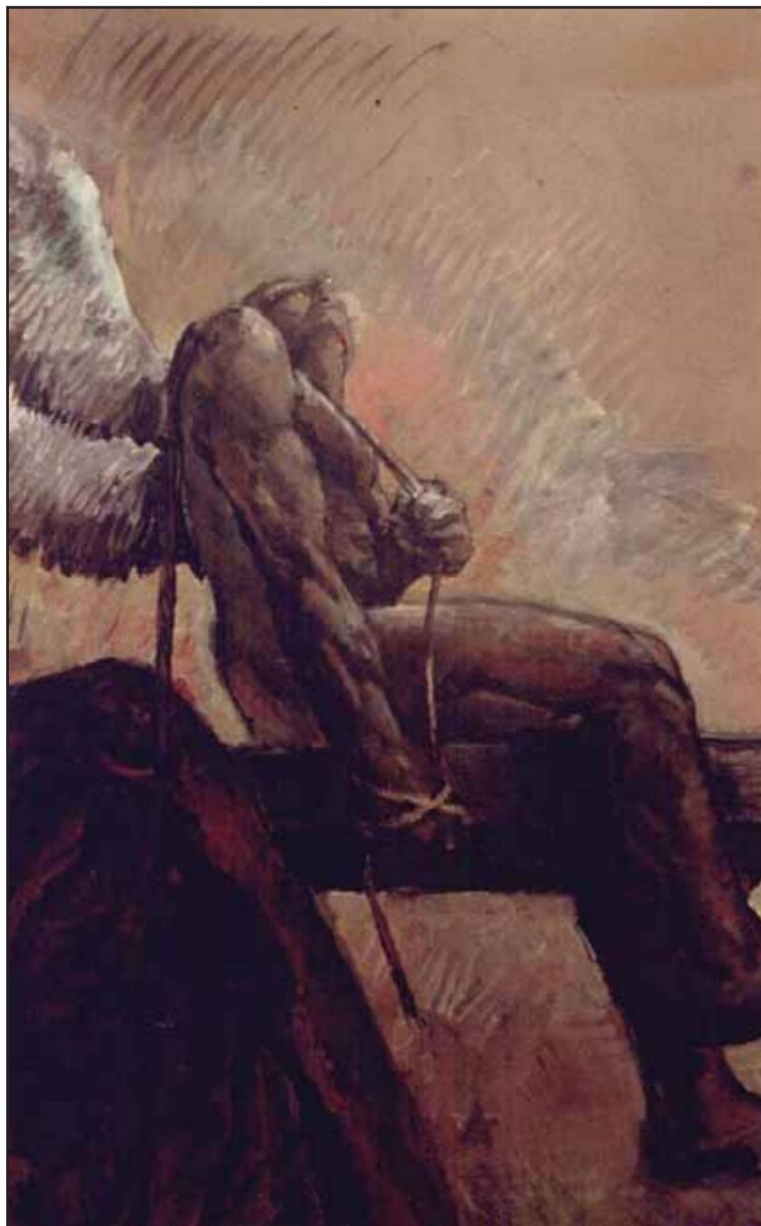
Once the sketches were presented and the project approved, I set to work studying the various figures. On packaging paper, size 1.50 x 1 m, he made the sketches of the angels. I looked for male and female role models. I did many studies, stocky angels, and delicate and sensual "angels". Unbelievable postures, marked muscles, surprising movements, violent chiaroscuro. He painted incessantly. He finished one sketch and quickly began another, the strokes were fast and violent, the tones like bursts of color. It was as if one were in the middle of a stormy gale, an artistic gale that overwhelms and drags you like a fantastic whirlwind in which you feel as if you are floating.

The sketches were piling up, ready for transport, from Madrid to Alcoy, where he had to make the great mural of D. Bosco. Everything was ready.

The task was arduous, but I felt the satisfaction of an artist who has worked with imagination to carry out a great project. I had it all figured out. Another thing is, the corrections on the fly, which arise in all large works. It's like actors on stage, if they have learned the role well, they can improvise at any given moment. I realized that my responsibility was enormous. A mural of 200 square meters in white, hoping that the lines with the

charcoal begin to creak, it's like a herd of bulls coming towards you and one must deal with them, with art, with ease, but also with fear and responsibility.

The procedure I used was the same as in the mural of San Pancraccio. The canvas attached to the wall. I looked for a saddler who could solve the job of gluing it. I remembered the one who had solved it for me in 1953, but this man had passed away. So I went to see Alonso Ruiz who had a workshop on Alzamora street, precisely, he was an apprentice when the canvas was placed on the altar of San Pancraccio, and therefore, he already had experience. I left everything fixed: the canvas, the materials and the scaffolding. Everything had to be ready to start the first decade of July, because I thought I could paint the mural between July, August and September and start classes in October. I have always had great consideration for my students and I have rarely missed class. That is why I was convinced that with three months I could carry out the work. And I started on the scheduled date.



*Mural Angel Don Bosco (sketch)*

The scaffolding was metal. I remembered with some fear the wooden scaffolding, built with planks tied with ropes. But this scaffolding was more comfortable, it had four wide floors and a staircase to access them, but it had some "black spots", as the chapel was circular in shape and the three-meter metal pieces were straight, in certain spaces, the gaps between scaffold and wall, were dangerous. Some metal plates that were very well coupled, formed the floor of the different heights.

The first few days you feel strange, but soon you lose your fear and therein lies the danger. I mentalized that to move a foot, I had to make sure, where I put it. The last floor was the most uncomfortable, because there were places where you couldn't stand up, and if I crouched down, I wouldn't reach the wall.

On the first floor I set up, let's say, the workshop. There I placed all the sketches, the charcoal boxes, the brushes, the white spirit bottles, the oil tube boxes, and a quantity of rags for cleaning the utensils. A large cloth covered the entire scaffolding, isolating me from the church. D. Ángel told me one day –From the canvas inwards, it is his studio, his workshop, it is not a church–. I took a small transistor with me and put on "Radio 2" in the hours when there were no religious services. Two long electrical hoses and two large muzzle bulbs illuminated my space in the chapel.

I started drawing on the ceiling. I put a small nail in the center of the spherical cap and, with a cord, I drew a circle and in its center I drew a dove, the Holy Spirit, and from the circle I built the Archimedean spiral where the angels had to be drawn.

I was interested in drawing all the elements to provide them. What bothered me a lot was the stained glass window that was in the center of the mural with a San Luis Gonzaga, which had nothing to do with the theme of my work, and also, something inconceivable, the air heating device, placed in the left side. A square meter and a half wide, by half a meter high, covered by a metal grill through which the hot air came out. I had to find a solution to hide that.

I drew on the ceiling, following the spiral, a circle of angels of both sexes; ten angels, stocky, sensual, entwined by the hands. For the canopy of Mary Help of Christians, ten angels also hold the various elements that form a kind of canopy and canopy. On the left side, three more angels: one sitting on top of a wooden beam trying to lift the large cloth that hangs from the beam, and two others helping to raise the clothing.

I was following the sketches. Sixteen figures make up the group of carriers, and communion boys and girls who accompany the passage of the Virgin.

Fourteen characters for the soccer team, plus the photographer. On the right side, the life-size portrait of D. Bosco, Domingo Savio, and the bust of Laura Vicuña. Forty heads of children, three funeral angels, D. Bosco recumbent, and the child that symbolizes his soul. Total, in this space, 47 figures. And in the entire set of the mural, 107 figures.

It took me two weeks to draw all the scenes and compositions. I always have as a rule to cover the white of the canvas with very fluid color and white spirit, staining quickly to tone the work. But here, it was impossible for me because it was an enormous job. So I began to paint conclusively for the dome.

Around this time my godson Juan Ramón Rufino Valor got married and logically, we were invited to the wedding, which was held in Riaza, since the bride was from there. I don't

I was able to attend because of my work at the altar, but Pepa did go, and from there they called me at an agreed time, so that I could congratulate the bride and groom and let them know how my work was going. Pepa had been talking to Amparo, the groom's mother, about her concern about my solitary situation on a scaffolding 40 meters high. And Amparo suggested the idea that Juan, her husband and boyfriend's father, fond of painting, a good friend and with an artist's temperament, could collaborate with me and accompany me in the hours of solitude.

Women know how to handle things well, and when Pepa spoke to me on the phone, she told me about the conversation between them. It seemed fine to me, and when they came from Riaza I called Juan and a collaboration began that further united our friendship.

Juan prepared the large spaces for me. I put the base paint on the skyscapes and walls, so that I could solve the plastic. He made the "collage" of the photos, on the photographer's tripod machine. Later, when I told D. Ángel del Barrio that the stained glass window in the center had to be replaced, Juan Rufino built one, with a floral theme that was more in line with the mural.

During all the time I was drawing, I was thinking about how to hide the hot air coming out, until I found the solution. I remembered from my youth that the so-called "paradas" were made in the Corpus Christi procession. –In some places a table was placed in the middle of the road, covered with a lace tablecloth and decorated with flowers and aromatic herbs, to receive and rest there, the Custody–, this gave me the solution. I drew a kind of lace tablecloth over the radiator and a large basket with herbs and wild flowers.

Once drawn, fitted, composed and corrected, the entire altar, I began to paint, and I started with the dove. Then the theological triangle and a kind of celestial fire that surrounds the space of the Holy Spirit. Then I began to paint the first angel, the one that is attached to the arch at the mouth of the chapel. It was hard work, I had the sketch by my side, but I was also improvising. The color was fluid, nuanced, the strokes strong. What you are painting must be seen from forty meters away, but what is desperate is that I could not see what I was painting from afar, since the scaffolding covered the total vision. Working like this is very painful, but at the same time gratifying. You solve plastic problems in your mind, and your hands, like harmonic batons, follow the patterns of your brain. You improvise as you go and redo what doesn't satisfy you. You don't have time to rub the paint. This sprouts fresh, spontaneous, and as the spaces are filled, the shapes appear triumphant. It is nuanced and intoned with lights and shadows. Here it is not worth minimizing, the brushstroke must be decided, resolve with breadth, with grandeur and little by little, an electrifying vertigo is taking over you. Many times I had to stop, breathe and calm down, and then continue.

On that march, what I realized was that the deadline that I had set for finishing the work would be very tight for me. So I decided to put in more hours at work. Since we were in Agres, I got up at three, and on my way to Alcoy, in a bar in Muro, I drank a café con leche and at four I was already in church. I entered and the darkness, softened only by the reddish light of a small lamp, was impressive together with the silence, a silence that weighed like a marble slab. I went up to the scaffolding, turned on the lights, put on my work suit, connected "Radio 2", and began to paint. The symphonic waves filled the emptiness of the church while I began my daily work. At noon I would have lunch in the Salesians' bar and then resume the session until eight in the evening, when I would go up to Agres.

When I had finished the circle of angels, I began to paint the Virgin. At the entrance to the Salesian premises, right next to the elevator, an image of Mary Help of Christians rests on a large pedestal, precisely the image that is paraded on May 24. I drew it in several notes. I sat on the ground to have the point of view from below, as it would be seen in the procession and based on these notes, I began to work on the face, then the clothing, the pinkish tunic and the blue cloak with the golden border. In her right hand the scepter, and the Child Jesus resting on her left arm. When I went to paint the canopy, I made Pepa take out all the quilts she had saved and one by one, I hung them on a balcony in Agres's house, to paint the silk damask and transfer them to the hangings that hold the Angels.

Rufino, he used to come around nine and at ten we would go up to the bar to have breakfast, and then I would eat at half past two. I soon made many friends. I met, during lunchtime, with an old acquaintance. –When I went to the Marist school, I had a teacher named D. Rafael Pérez Canet– and our meeting was pleasant, almost every day, we used to eat together, remembering those times when I was a child and he was a young master.

Time was passing fast. I had many visitors, friends and people who came to see how the painting was going. Some journalist and people from the radio to do reports on the progress of the mural.

D. Ángel del Barrio, also went up many times. Some days it was pretty bad. A malignant disease had greatly impaired him, but he was lively and positive. He loved my painting. How much he enjoyed watching the angels, their foreshortenings and their contorted movements. He was very excited about the project that I paint the entire church. He told me, –Ramón, when you finish this work, we have to think about painting a mural to Saint George–. The church had a chapel dedicated to the Saint, but it was small, like that of San Pancracio. I told him that it would be better to change the Saint of the chapel and move it to the large chapel that was opposite that of D. Bosco, and thus he could develop a magnificent painting capturing Georgina's feat. Not like the mural that Cabrera Cantó painted in the church of San Jorge, about the battle and the appearance of the Saint, but representing on the altar, the greatness of the Alcoyan festival. The archbishopric granted the transfer of the saint to the other altar, and the project was awaiting preparation. He also told me to think about the murals in the chapels of Corazón de Jesús, San José, and the main altar, of which I had already presented some sketches in 1955, and in the chapel that they wanted to use for the newly canonized Laura Vicuna. With which the murals of the church of the Salesians would be completed. What's more, I wanted, and put it in writing, that the day I died there would be a place in the church for my burial. I told him that it seemed fine to me, but that there would have to be two places together, for my wife and me.

The month of August began and the church was sultry, especially in the afternoon. I had to buy some tapes to keep the sweat from my forehead. So, I also painted on Sunday mornings and on the 21st, which happened to be a Sunday, I had a pleasant visit. Our friends Mariángeles Arazo and her husband, the doctor, Miguel Almela, came from Valencia. They were seeing my work, they went up to all the floors, we chatted and we remembered the times when Pepa and I lived in Valencia. At one point, Miguel noticed my feet, and told me, "Ramón, your feet are very swollen." I argued that perhaps it was due to the many hours he was on his feet, and he answered, -when you go up to Agres, look at your

blood pressure, if the minimum is higher than ten, take an Ameride. They said goodbye, and when I went up to Agres I checked my blood pressure, it was 11-21, but we didn't have any diuretics at home. And I didn't give it more importance either. On Monday, when I went down to Alcoy, I went to a pharmacy that was near the church, and I asked for Ameride, but they didn't have it and they told me to come by in the afternoon to pick it up. I forgot about it.

Like every day I got up at dawn and went down to Muro. The owner of the bar was extremely surprised to always see me at the same time so early in the morning, and perhaps he was wondering who I was. That day, point blank, he asked me –You, what, to take a peek at the factory? This is how business goes well– I explained to him the reason for my morning presence at the bar, and we laughed. Then I took the car and paint.

I had already finished the wheel of angels, the part of Don Bosco deceased, but I was missing the funeral angels. He had also finished the image of the Virgin and was painting the angels that form the canopy. There was a moment when I started to feel bad. The electric light dimmed and I thought I was going to be left in the dark. But it wasn't the light, it was me who was running out of vision. I slowly sat up and began to take a deep breath, I checked my pulse, which I practically didn't have.

I remembered that in a trouser pocket, which was hung on the first floor, I used to carry a pillbox with Cafinitrina. Slowly, I got down, looked for the pillbox and put a pill under my tongue, and lay down on the planché. I do not know how long it was.

I heard footsteps coming up the stairs. It was Francisco Picó, "Torrat", who was gilding parts of the altar. Every day he used to come around nine, but that day, I don't know why, coincidence or protection, he arrived around seven. When he saw me lying on the ground, so pale, he told me, he thought I had fallen from the scaffolding. He sat me up, and began to air me with a towel, and told me, –Ramón, let's go to the Residence. I take you in my car. He helped me down the stairs. We got in the car and got out. During the journey I began to feel better and I told him, "Turn around, take me to my car, I'll get on Agres, and tomorrow I'll be fine." But he insisted, "Ramón, you look very pale, you look like a deceased person. Come on, let them see you, and I'm sure it's nothing, but I think it's better. We arrived and went in for emergencies. Dr. Aracil Monllor received me, but when I presented cardiological symptoms, Dr. Guillermo Grau came. They did an electrocardiogram. I knew from my history that an EKG did not show alarming signs. I was terrified of having to stop my painting at the altar, and I thought the matter was settled. But after a while, Dr. Grau came back, telling me that the electrocardiogram had gone well, –as I thought–, but to confirm it they were going to do an analysis. I didn't like the thing anymore. The nurse came, she did the extraction and after a desperate time, the doctor arrived and told me that they were going to admit me to the UVI because I had a big heart attack. I did not want, in any way, to be hospitalized, but he told me, so that I would understand, –Look, the heart, to be normal, corresponds to 20 polyenzymes, and you now have 800.

Therefore, you have a horse heart attack. For your sake, we have to admit you. Everything collapsed for me, not because of my state, but because of my family, the stoppage of the work and the consequent delay.

"How do we notify your wife?" he asked me. –You have to call this Agres number–. They put me on a stretcher and admitted me to the UVI. They made me a catheter and I don't remember anything else. From my bed I could see a central cabin. I have a confused notion of having seen a person dressed in green, bearded and plump.

I thought he was a doctor. He waved his hand at me, greeting me. Then

I found out that his name was Jesús Castilla, with whom I would join a great friendship. He told me, when I came in and saw your monitor, I thought, it won't arrive until tomorrow. Thus, as in a dream, I know that Pepa and my son came in to see me, but there the notion of time is lost.

Days later, they took me out of the UVI and put me in a room. There were two more patients there, a man from Ibi, whose name was Tomás, and another from Cocentaina. I enter Guillermo Grau, and he told me that he was better. The scare had already passed. From that moment on, I had many visitors, family members, friends from Alcoy and Agres, press and radio journalists, since the news had spread rapidly.

I was feeling better and since Pepa was very tired, since she had barely left the hospital since I was admitted, Tomás's family, who took turns at night, insisted that Pepa go to rest and that they would take care of me if I needed something.

At eleven o'clock at night, a nurse came in and gave me the medication and a heparin injection. I don't know what happened to me, little by little, without realizing it, life was slipping away from me. In the background I heard a voice, it was the lady from Ibi calling me. I no longer remember anything else. I saw myself on top of a boat, I looked at my hands attached to the edge of the boat, but at the same time I saw myself standing naked and with my back turned. The boat was advancing through a calm sea, a sweetish calm, with a gray-blue haze, there was not a bit of air and it seemed that from time to time the boat, under the keel, collided gently with something. I don't know how much time elapsed. They notified the nurses and with them the emergency doctor. They threw the separating curtains and dedicated themselves to resuscitating me. One of the nurses, seeing that I did not react to any treatment, began to slap me, to try to make me aware. He actually did, and a deep breath brought me back to life.

They notified Pepa, who came with my son quickly. And the next day, when Dr. Grau came, he strictly prohibited visits.

On September 6, they sent me to Agres. My sister-in-law, Raquel, came to the Residence and, together with my wife, took us home.

The doctor told me to rest, with short walks, without effort, a diet without fat, and to try to forget all worries. But my big concern was having paralyzed the painting on the altar. I did not live thinking when I would return and if I could resume work. I was like that until September 30, when in the hospital of S. Vicente del Raspeig, Dr. Quiles, -by the way, son of that Alexis Quiles, goalkeeper of "Alcoyano"- gave me an effort test, to see how my heart was going. When he finished, he gave me the diagnosis, which was negative. It was Friday, and we quickly went to the Alcoy hospital to see Dr. Grau, and despite all the opposition from my house, to tell him if he could continue painting the mural on Monday, October 3. He was reticent, and I was insistent, and he gave me a behavior plan. Start at nine, finish at one, eat slowly and take a short nap, and in the afternoon, a maximum of three hours, without getting tired. A diet low in calories and cardiological medication.

When I got to the altar, I went up slowly, turned on the lights, and looked at my handiwork. An emotion overwhelmed me, which I will never forget. And I started painting again. I went back to painting, what I had longed for all the time, and I began to paint for the flowers, which as an offering of gratitude I was modeling and giving color, to adorn the litter of Mary Help of Christians.

Juan Rufino, was watching me and said, -Ramón, "lola, lola mento", but it's one o'clock, time for you to stop, and go up to eat-.



This is how I calmly painted, without stress, without nervousness, little by little, everything that was missing from the altar. Pepa went to Madrid with my son, who had to resume his classes at the University, and I stayed in a room that D. Ángel gave me in the community.

This is how I painted the litter, the lampposts, the carriers. I made some portraits of the children who accompanied the Virgin, dressed for their first communion, Noemí and Tito, children of Salvador Pastor, and my son, holding the ribbons that came out of the throne; the altar boys and the people.

Then, the soccer team, in a snapshot pose for a photographer with a tripod. I still had to complete the angels that formed the canopy and it occurred to me, as a tribute to the staff, doctors and nurses of the Residence, to paint a dropper in the hand of an angel on which I put the date 8-23-88, the day of my admission to the hospital.

Once all this set was finished, I went on to complete Don Bosco's dream: the boat, represented by a shadowy silhouette, with Dominic Savio and the children from the Salesian school. On the right side I finished the funerary angel who carries the soul of Don Bosco in his arms. And I got to the end and signed the work. "Ramón Castañer, fecit 1988".

Then Javier Rufino varnished the mural with a compressor and a commemorative plaque was placed, on which it says: "Ramón Castañer painted. Juan Rufino collaborated". The inauguration took place on December 20 at 8:15 p.m. The act was presented by Mr. Ángel del Barrio, who warmly described my work and my mishap. Next it was Adrián Espí who presented the mural, under the theme of "Approaching the artist and his work". Eduardo Terol and Paco Amaya offered a small clarinet and piano concert, with works by Bela Bartok. Then, Pepa gave a small recital on Christmas themes and the event was closed by D. Miguel Asurmendi, Provincial Inspector of the Salesians. With which concluded, the curtains covering the mural were slid back, the spotlights were turned on, and the painting appeared in all its splendor, to the cheers of the public. For me it was a very emotional act, because at a certain moment, I thought that perhaps I could not finish my work.

Days later, we returned to Madrid. It was already Christmas time. I was looking forward to being at home and those parties made me feel, like never before, the warmth of home and family life. Everything was fine, but I had brought in my luggage, from Alcoy, fear, a tangible fear that settled at home. Fear of overreaching my strength without realizing it, fear of skipping the regimen, fear of making love. And the same thing happened to Pepa. He would get upset if I was late and try to track me down, in case something had happened to me.

I rejoined the Simancas Institute. All the comrades were happy about my recovery. I especially greeted the director Paloma Sánchez, and I thanked her again, for coming to the Alcoy hospital to visit me while I was hospitalized.

I went to visit Dr. Piñeiro, who had already assisted me in my first heart attack. I presented him with Alcoy's medical history, treatment, medication and diet. It seemed correct to him and he established a regimen of monthly visits.

Little by little, confidence was reborn in us. I dared to take the car, and fortunately, the fear syndrome remained, I think forever, like a ghost floating in the air.

D. Ángel del Barrio's illness worsened and they had to take him to his land, to his house. But before he left, he called José Luis Córcoles and entrusted him to take care personally, that the realization be carried out.

of the mural of Saint George. And perhaps, as a testament to his last will, he died on April 23, 1989, Saint George's Day.

By the time the course ended, we had scheduled a trip through Galicia. I was already fully recovered and animated. Galicia was a part of Spain that we did not know. A neighbor of ours, our friend Antonio Vilar, a Galician through and through, pharmacist and ship captain, outlined an interesting itinerary for us so that we could get to know his land better. We made four points of permanence, Ribadeo, La Coruña, Santiago and La Toja. And at the beginning of July, the inns arranged, there we went.

Our first point was Ribadeo, the fishing city, and during our four-day stay, we visited the neighboring towns. Castropol, San Román, Barreiros, Fos, Nois and also the inland towns: Mondoñedo and through Villalba, Bahamonde, Otero del Rey we reached Lugo. We covered all the high estuaries, from Vivero, Punta Rocandoira, Estaca de Bares, to the Santa María estuary in Ontigueira.

After La Coruña. Beautiful capital. We visit the most important monuments, the famous Hercules, a lighthouse from Roman times, the Town Hall and the Plaza de María Pita. For several days we traveled the "coast of death", Cayón, Malpica, Camariñas, Mujía, up to Finisterre. And then El Ferrol, Puente deume, and the Ares and Betanzos estuaries.

Our next stay was in Santiago de Compostela. And the arrival at the impressive Plaza del Obradoiro, and the obligatory visit to the cathedral, which in the Middle Ages was one of the most important pilgrimage centers in the Christian world.

The current cathedral dates from 1188 but the initiative is found in a document from 1168, in a diploma from Fernando II granting Maestro Mateo, its builder, a life annuity to meet his needs and the work of the cathedral. When it was opened to the faithful, it was not considered an artistic monument, nor was the Pórtico de la Gloria. This Portico is the most characteristic work of the transition period from Romanesque to Gothic. The doorway is ogival in shape, with three arches decorated with a great profusion of figures on the archivolts and the tympanum. In the central mullion there is a seated statue of the Apostle.

There are the attributes of the Passion of Christ, with a panoply that refers to the canticle of the "Improperia" of the liturgy of Good Friday at that time. The liturgical tone of this imagery is evident in the angels holding the cross. The allusion to Christ's descent into hell is offered to us in the arch on the left. In the center, a priestly Christ who presides over the Portico and in the arch on the right represents the Last Judgment. The 24 Biblical elders decorate the Portico. Maestro Mateo must have been a great music fan, since almost all the characters carry a musical instrument, in addition, the instruments are represented with all the details, sound holes, placement of bridges, tailpieces, handles and pegs. No doubt Master Mateo must have known the Calixtino Codex, where pilgrims are described playing a wide variety of instruments.

In chapter 17 of book 1, the translation by Abelardo Moralejo says: *"Some pilgrims play zithers, others lyres, other eardrums, other flutes, pipes, trumpets, harps, violas, and British or Gallic wheels..."* Well then, the builder applied many of these instruments to the characters portrayed, but without denoting any gesture or commitment of a musical nature, they simply hold the instruments.

The interior of the cathedral has a Latin cross plan, three naves and an ambulatory. In the Main Chapel, there is the statue of the Apostle dressed as a pilgrim, the altar is made of silver and baroque style from the 18th century, under the chapel is the crypt with the remains of the Saint.

When we visited the cathedral, it presented an unusual aspect, since the visit of the Pope was expected, and the lamps and the botafumeiro had been lowered to polish them, and the carpets, chandeliers and tapestries were being cleaned. But we were able to visit the chapels of the apse, the chapel of the Relics, which serves as a royal pantheon; that of the Christ of Burgos, with the tomb of Archbishop Carrillo and the cloister, from the 16th century.

We walk through the typical porticoed streets, we sit in rustic inns and listen to the tunas with their typical songs: Clavelitos, Fonseca, La morena de mi copla, Pranto.

An obligatory visit was to go to Padrón, to Rosalía de Castro's house. The spirit of the poetess floated in the corners of that house, in which it seemed that her verses were still being heard:

I, from my window,  
which the angry elements lash,  
rejoiced and thoughtful, listen to  
the discordant concert  
sympathetic to my soul.  
Oh my friend the winter!

Our last place was La Toja. There was nothing to visit there, neither monuments nor cathedrals. We were at the Grand Hotel, leading the life of a bourgeois tourist, we were sunbathing on comfortable sun loungers, and at night we visited the casino, with no luck at roulette.

During those days we made some excursions to Cambados, Sanxenxo, Pontevedra and we ended our wonderful trip.

I made many notes of the marine landscapes, boats in the ports, in the estuaries, drying in the sun, solitary boats, moored boats, with clean reflections without waves. Sailors gathering nets, and women repairing them. Rocks green with moss. White, clean, immense sands. Seagulls on the water, seagulls on boats. Shipyards with large barges under repair. A whole landscape, and a world unknown to the people of the deep sea.

When José Luis Córcoles spoke with me, he explained his intention that all "les filaes" contribute to the realization of the mural. But his idea met with little success. So he decided that he and his family would take charge of the execution of the work.

I began, as in the Don Bosco mural, to prepare the sketches. I imagined a representation of the Georgian party, with the participation of all "les filaes". On the left, a float from the 1930s, with children and young ladies dressed in costumes from that time and finishing off the ensemble, the "Pardalot" from Alcoy. Next, festive people with the costumes of the old "filaes". A Realist, with the cardboard "cavallet", the figure of a "Tomasina vella". A large float with the figure of the Christian captain, standing, defiant, battle-hardened, protected by the flags of various "filaes". Later, a festero from each row and in the center of the composition the figure of "Mossen Torregrosa". Below is the Relic of the Saint, with the bearers dressed in the dalmatics designed by the painter Fernando

Cabrera, together with the heralds of the lampposts. The Moorish captain on a float with a protective umbrella and large umbels in the background. Horses, camels, and a great flurry of pigeons. Angels holding the shield of Alcoy and in the upper part of the scene glorified Saint George.

I made a sketch of 216 x 56 cm, divided into three parts, painted in gouache, whose composition recalled the procession of the "panatheneas", a Greek frieze from the Hellenistic period. I arranged an interview with Córcoles and handed him the sketches, and we agreed that when everything was resolved, he would let me know.

## CHAPTER XI

*Cavaller del Miracle that in celica victory  
Has vingut a l'almena cavalcant among the blau.*

*Joan Valls Jorda*



At the Simancas Institute, I had a classmate, Carmen Castro Ingalature, a professor of Art History and an indefatigable traveller, who knew Spain inch by inch, who traced some tourist routes for me, which I still have and are a true work of art. Pepa and I made our trips through several years with them.

The first route was the visit to Portugal that we began in the summer of 1990. Three points of residence: Porto, Coimbra and Lisbon.

Porto seemed to us to be a typically Portuguese city. Its narrow, crowded streets, of old buildings with its baroque cathedral at the top of the city, with the characteristic "Manueline" tiles, those tiles painted cobalt blue, with bucolic drawings, idealistic decoration, and classical distribution, moldings, garlands, idealized putti and Hellenistic matrons.

The descent to the Duero River, where those barges with large inflated sails with their enormous advertising signs could cross the river to visit the Gaia neighborhood full of taverns and grocery stores scattered along the entire riverbank. They were the typical rooms where night shows were put on for tourists and where Lusitanian folklore was exhibited, with the famous fados.

We were in the "Rabelo" room and we heard the torn and crying voice that said:

Always go in front  
 Qual "Rabelo" afasdistado  
 Gaia says present He  
 says present ao fado.  
 Na beira-río  
 Com orgulho diz ao Porto  
 That sings the fado with  
 brio E de Gaia o su conforto

We also visited Viana do Castelo with its famous hotel on top of a hill where the immense landscape opened up to our feet. The city of Braga with the church of "Bon Jesu do monde" where we arrived with the funicular, to make the descent on foot and admire the squares with life-size images of the Way of the Cross.

In Barcellos we coincide with its famous market on the first Thursday of the month. That seemed like an oriental tale. On an esplanade thousands of objects were piled up, under brightly colored awnings, that street vendors offered to visitors.

Wicker objects stalls. Baskets, trunks, baskets, cribs, trunks, chairs, tables, screens, hundreds of hats, bags for shopping and for the beach. Other stalls displayed the typical popular Portuguese pottery. Dishes with the famous Lusitano rooster, tureens in the shape of laying hens, chandeliers, candlesticks, fruit bowls and ashtrays. All crowded and with a variety of prices. Bargaining was essential. Refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers, televisions, portable radios, record players and hundreds of tape players. Shrill radios that mixed fados with modern rhythms.

Clothing stalls, saturated with garments and glass stalls with a variety of objects and shapes. And a lot of bronze: table clocks, of cloying shapes and sizes, some with putti crowning the piece, others with horses and Roman riders wielding spears, forming bronze seed beads. All with their tiny pendulums moving at full speed and their striking with a little music that sounded at the hours, quarters and half. That was a hubbub with its marching tac-tac. And in the middle of that babel, a very Portuguese, very Baroque hermitage, with a Virgin on the altar dressed in a maroon tunic and a blue velvet cape. Very variegated. Flowers, candles, amber lights whose sparkles multiplied in the moldings and in the acanthus leaves of an ornate golden altarpiece.

Later, we move to Coimbra, the stately city. We visited his famous university and its complete library.

On July 8, Coimbra celebrates the day of its patron saint, Saint Elizabeth of Portugal, who is called "the Holy Queen" -She was the daughter of Pedro III of Aragon and Constanza of Sicily, and was canonized by Urban VI, in 1625.

In the city they commemorate him with an endless procession, a multitude of faithful and dozens of girls dressed in the Saint's costume. Pink tunic, and ocher velvet cape, white veil with a flower crown and an apron, which they hold with one hand, where flowers of various colors rest.

The city has two parts: the old one, with narrow and steep streets, and the modern one, well urbanized. Separated by the "Arco de Almedina", which are remains of old walls. We visit the church of Santa Cruz, where the tombs of Alfonso Enríquez and Sancho I are; and also the old cathedral. Then the city Liliput, "Portugal do pequenitos", a mini city, where all the most characteristic buildings of Portugal and its colonies are represented, on a small scale.

We were in Aveiro, the little Portuguese Venice, with its many canals and its boats imitating gondolas, and we went to see the ruins of Leiria Castle, with its cloister. The obligatory visit to Fátima, in the municipality of Vila Nova de Ourém, where on the large esplanade with the church they commemorate the apparition of the Virgin to the three little shepherds.

Batalha, a city on the banks of the Liz River, famous for its monastery of Santa María de la Victoria, erected by Juan I, commemorating the battle of Aljubarrota, and in which several styles are mixed due to its long construction time. Then the monastery of Santa María de Alcobaça, built by Alfonso I. Its layout is grandiose, its rooms enormous, and its refectory magnificent. In the transept of the church are the tombs of Inés de Castro and Pedro I.

Our last point of residence was Lisbon, as the "old and stately" song says, located on the banks of the Tagus River. We can say that the city is divided into three parts: the eastern, with remains of Arab buildings; the lower part, with the most typical houses and streets of the city; and the western part, which is already the most modern.

We were in the cathedral, the Congress Palace, the church of Santa María de Belem and the Jerónimos convent. Naturally we visited the museum of the Gulbenkiam foundation and signed up for the tourist visit, with a bullfight of "forçados" included, and at night in nightclubs where we heard the fados sing again.

We went up to the castle of San Jorge, a saint so familiar to us and we contemplated a fantastic view of the city.

And to end our trip, we were in Estoril, Cascaís and Sintra with its surprising Castillo da Pena. Built on top of a mountain in the early



In the 20th century, at the whim of a rich bourgeois, in which he mixed all the styles of history, he made a huge, phantasmagorical and hallucinating construction.

As on all trips I made a collection of notes and drawings. When we returned to Madrid, I began studying the different figures for the Saint George mural, on 160 x 90 cm paper. For two years I was preparing the sketches, a total of 30. I looked for documentation for the old costumes, as well as for the float from the 30s, and photographs of the Relic.

When everything was settled, I made a trip to Alcoy, and they introduced me to the new director of the Salesians, D. Antonio Echeto, who gave me all the facilities. We repeated the operation of pasting the canvas, and the central stained glass window was suppressed, since it was a blind window that broke the harmony of the whole. And all prepared, scaffolding, stairs, the different floors and the cloth that covered the scaffolding, isolating me from the rest of the church, I began to draw the mural at the beginning of July 1992.

When I conceived the composition, the whole formed a long horizontal. But on the altar I had to correct the composition. If you wanted the figures to be life-size, you had to structure their placement. On the left side, as I have said before, would be the float and the party with the ancient figures. In the central part, as in the D. Bosco chapel, the marble plinth that surrounds the altar is higher and divides the whole into three spaces. On this center I placed, in the first place some standing festivities, and behind the cavalry. At the back, in a kind of high tribune, the Relic, the bearers and the heralds with the lampposts and on both sides, two floats, that of Captain Cristiano and that of Captain Moro. In the upper part, already almost in the spherical cap, the group of angels, holding the shield of Alcoy, and in the center the figure of Saint George, seen, naturally, from a low point. The belly of the horse and the arm of the Saint held high with beams of light flashing from his hand. On the right side, composing the scene, as in the altar of Don Bosco, a beam from which hangs a huge cloth with the emblems of the Association of Saint George. This cloth is supported by a Moor who, when picking it up at the bottom, reveals the Christian Ensign, with some figures in battle. Almost at the end it occurred to me to incorporate the party castle, so traditional.

Like every summer we were in Agres, but on that occasion I didn't go too far. I got up at eight, we had breakfast and calmly went down to Alcoy to paint. I ate at the Salesians and, as at Don Bosco's altar, Juan Rufino came to collaborate with me. But time changes things, Rufino was not in good health, he had some dizziness and on some occasion they had to accompany him home. I was presented with the dilemma that if he could not come, I had to find someone to replace him. At that time, I made a great friendship with Antonio Castelló, and he was the one who suggested that perhaps Paco Aznar could make up for Rufino's absence. And so it was, I spoke with Paco and we agreed on his work. When Juan Rufino returned and I introduced him to Paco Aznar, the situation did not fit well. A tension was established, which ended up breaking our friendship. I did not quite understand the reason for that situation, but the reality was that. One day he said goodbye. I told him that he could come whenever and as many times as he wanted, that our friendship was above all else. But they were not worth couplets. Since that day we have not met again.

see.

Everyone who knows Paco knows his character. He is hardworking, compliant, and makes a joke out of any situation. We've had a great time on those scaffolds.

Another good element was the friend Paco Picó, "Torrat". I had already been in the previous mural, it was the one that took me to the Hospital when I had a heart attack and it continued to come in my second job. As in the previous mural, the first floor was used as a workshop. Boxes with tubes of oil, brushes, sketches, cans with white spirit, rags to clean. Well, Paco Picó made sure that everything was well ordered. The oil tubes placed in order of scales: white, yellow, red, crimson, ochre, earth, green, blue and black. When the palettes were very dirty, he would clean them with stripper and leave them as good as new. Every day he cleaned the brushes. I greatly appreciated your collaboration. He is an excellent person and a good friend. I remember one day, when I was painting, my head fell into a kind of pit four meters deep, which the marble of the border formed with the wall, there was no way to descend, because the hole was not the wide enough to fit a person. I got an impressive anger, because I did not know how to get another touch and for me it was a necessary instrument. Taking advantage of the pause, I went down to the service that was in the sacristy. When I went up, the tiento was standing there, leaning on the scaffolding. Given my surprise, I asked "Torrat" how he had gotten it. And he, without flinching and smiling, answered me: "I clapped my hands and said – feel it, go up – and look at it, there it is." This was many years ago and I still don't know how he got it out.

I started painting around Saint George. The Saint appears mounted on a bareback steed, without a saddle or bridles, on top of a blue cloth with red tassels, dressed as a Roman legionary, a helmet with a large crimson plume, like the enormous cape, leggings and sandals with straps that are secured in the throat of the foot. On the bottom of her left sandal she has her size number, XLV, I allowed myself this humorous license. The arm raised, with a gold bracelet on the wrist, the outstretched hand from which beams of light come out, forming a luminous X. The horse is white with black legs, and a sky with stormy clouds surrounds the Saint.

Then I went on to paint the shield of Alcoy. On a stone square, carved in a German way, the emblem of Alcoy appears in relief: a castle with a double tower, crenellated, with the two rivers, the Molinar and the Barchell. Above the central battlements the cross, and the two pennants on the towers, with the significance of Ciudad Leal. Above the cross, the diamond with the winged four-barred and above the royal crown and finishing off the shield, a large jousting helmet, with rich lambrequin and a double flight for crest. Three angels surround the shield. A stocky, Atlantean, holds in his powerful arms the set of shield and ornaments. Another angel is dancing with a tambourine. My son Ramón served as a model for these two angels. The whole is formed by a smiling angel, with outstretched arms, open wings and an undulating body.

They prepared the sky for me, on which I painted stormy clouds and marked the filtered shadow of points of light that the scaffolding cast on the painted ceiling.

I continued with the Relic, which Rufino had gilded with gold leaf, on which I painted the ornaments and details that make it up. This Relic, which houses a bone from the hand of Saint George ceded by Bañeres to Alcoy, was a Custody of the Royal Parish of San Mauro and San Francisco. But due to its enormous weight, it was donated to the church of San Jorge so that the relic could be deposited there and taken out in procession on a wheeled litter.

In the sky and behind the Relic, a large number of pigeons start a upward flight towards the patron saint.

When I was going to paint the bearers of the Relic, the idea occurred to me that the characters were portraits of friends and acquaintances. So the idea seemed great to me. Perpetuate on the mural the effigy of friends who would go down to posterity

dressed as festive people or representing characters. Now, after a few years, I think the idea was not so successful. From the beginning, it annoyed me. No one had wanted to contribute financially to the mural, but now many people believed they had the right to appear on it. Someone did not want mengano or zutano to appear representing their filà and they wanted to impose a strange person on me. I even got into heated arguments. But the people I loved appeared on the mural, even though I later regretted it.



*Festival Wall. Mary Help of Christians Alcoy 200 m2 1993*

For this I needed photographs of the people to portray, and I turned again to Antonio Castelló, who when I was preparing the sketches, I would ask him by phone: "Antonio, I need photos of flying doves." He would go to the gazebo, he would feed the pigeons and when they were gathered he would scare them and when they took flight he would shoot the machine. —"Antonio, I need the "scripts" of the "filas"— and he sent me many photos of the pennants.

I was gathering the photographs, some were taken by Antonio. And I began to paint the portrait of Miguel Jover, the first of the bearers of the Relic. After that of Juan Antonio Castelló Lloréns; then Ismael Gisbert and the son of Adrián Espí, Jorge Espí Matarredona. With this group he completed the bearers. They wear a dalmatic with the four-barred on the pectoral and the Alcoy shield superimposed. And on the skirt the emblems of Castilla, on a sinople background, and that of León, on gules. They all wear brown hose, ruffs, and white gloves; red velvet caps with a small emblem of the Association.

I continued with the lantern bearers. One, for my friend Antonio Revert, and the other, for David Aracil, son of my close friend, now deceased, Antonio Aracil. With these characters the part of the tribune was concluded.

On the left side, the float of Captain Cristiano. Large Prussian blue canopy supported by spears. (The Captain's suit is an adaptation of the one that Hermelando Linares wore at the 1986 Christian Entrance, representing the Guzmanes.) On the tunic, embroidered the legend, "HIC EST VICTOR", - I am the victor. In his right hand he holds the wide cloak, and in his left a huge pike. He is standing on a vermilion podium defiantly.

One fine day a boy appeared on the scaffolding. He introduced himself as Juan Pérez, a student of Fine Arts in Valencia, studying Restoration. He told me, if it bothered me if he came to see how he painted, he liked my style very much and that way he would learn to paste and solve plastic problems. And indeed, he came many days. I had no one to represent Captain Moro, and I asked him if he wanted to be the Caliph of the Mohammedan hosts. It seemed good to him, and his portrait remained in the face of Captain Moro. The figure is standing, holding a crescent scepter, large feathers on the turban and extending his left arm to show all his might. Crimson doublet and wide belt with gold buckle. Golden pectoral and shoulder pads, large multicolored sleeves, purple-pink bloomers and embossed green boots and a large green parasol covering him.

I wanted to put a legend in Arabic letters on the parasol, but I didn't want to invent signs and write something outrageous. I asked many people and finally, one day a Muslim appeared on the scaffolding. He told me that an acquaintance had told him that I needed someone to write a sentence in Arabic to paint the letters. I thanked him for his courtesy and he wrote to me on a piece of paper. "ALLAH IS GREAT.\* IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MERCIFUL AND THE MERCIOUS", and he indicated that the first sentence was the most important. After that he painted a red dot and then the second sentence.

On the steering wheel of the umbrella, with large yellow letters, I painted those signs that he wrote me, but that had a meaning. Behind the Captain, two umbels with large feathers.

When I started painting the left side I thought it would be interesting,

A mountainous landscape will appear in the background and in the background the castle of Barchell.

Once again I turned to good Antonio Castelló. The next day I had some formidable photos of the landscape with the castle, and the characteristic pine tree, whose vertical was twisted by lightning.

The first figure I painted was a "Bequetero" with a cardboard horse. It is not the portrait of anyone, it is an invention. Next I started with the car float. It's a 1920s Essex car, with a thermometer in the radiator cap, large headlights, one with a rubber band around it to keep the glass from falling out. I completely covered the hood with flowers and exposed a part of the license plate, -A- 152..., the radiator panel and the gear crank.

Since the car was seen from below, I went to the Racó parking lot, spoke with Javier Terol, who had a Chevrolet with the same characteristics as the one I was painting, and I made several drawings of the leaf springs, the framework of the parts of the underside of the engine, wheel drums and worn tires. With this I already had an exact reference of what I was going to paint.

In the sketch I had turned the box of the car into a float, covering it with a yellow ocher wooden frame edged with red. Two hatches in the front in the shape of an ellipse, to give visibility to the driver and in the center an Alcoy shield. I festooned the whole box with yew garlands and little flowers and on top I had placed a huge cardboard basket half covered with a red cloth and a large handle with a bow.

On the back I painted a large rock on which "El Pardalot" from Alcoy was perched, a kind of eagle, which with its beak simulated holding the basket. Inside the basket, seated, five ladies and three girls dressed in 1930s costumes. Of the five, three were portraits: Elvira Anduix Fuster, my niece; María Guillém de la Cruz and Carmina Almuzara Vilata; and the girls are the three sisters, Sara, Blanca and Carla Monllor Córcoles.

Next to the float three figures stand, a boy in the old Chano costume, a boy dressed in Asturiano from the same period and a "Vella Tomasina". There were also three portraits: Luis Puchades Rufino, José Luis Córcoles Satorre and Juan Rufino Sanjosé.

Summer was ending and I still had a large part of the mural to paint. I asked the Delegation for a permit for my own business and thus, without stress, I was able to continue with my work. Pepa and my son returned to Madrid and I went to occupy the room in the Salesian community that I had already used when the Don Bosco mural was made.

My good friend Adrián Espí visited me very often. His son Jorge used to accompany him sometimes, to record a video, and he would get lost on the scaffolding floors to shoot improbable sequences, scenes, details and shots. Adrián published several reports explaining and praising my painting of the "Mural de la Festa", as it has been called. A poem dedicated to his son, Jorge, portrayed as one of the bearers of the Relic, was published in the Ciudad newspaper, from which he copied the first two stanzas:

#### **I have a son in the altars**

I have a son on the altars  
 carrying the great Relic  
 together with the strong angels  
 and ascended doves,  
 weightless by the clouds, a  
 muezzin with edges in  
 the colossal height, a  
 nest of faith and streamers.

I have a son on the altars high  
 up and in the corner where the  
 light is sweeter and the  
 Reliquary is a mosque.  
 Minaret and sun of stars, tower  
 of peace and justice  
 between doves and athletes,  
 and atlanteans and smiles.

I had many visits, and the ones I needed were brought by Paquito Aznar. Once he appeared with the pianist from the nightclub "El Piano", a very kind South American man who was impressed by what he saw. Another day he met with the opera singer, Isabel Rey, who came with a companion and they were amazed, because according to what they said, it seemed impossible that at the end of the 20th century, there would be a painter doing such a monumental work. At each visit, Paquito told them implausible, hilarious stories that he made up as he went along, and we all ended up laughing.

The one who went up many times was a young Salesian, Manuel Villodre, a wonderful boy, intelligent and with clear and innovative ideas. He was a painter by hobby and sometimes I would go into his room and show me his paintings, while we talked about art. When I finished the mural, he gave me a large dossier of photos that he had taken while I was painting and that I keep with great affection.

D. Antonio Echeto, also climbed the scaffolding and reproached me if he saw that I exceeded my work.

And I remember, from those days, the Salesian friend José Cortés, and the good D. Sebastián, who refused to look at the painting until it was finished.

Radio Alcoy also broadcast news and reports about my painting and some broadcasts were made live from one of the floors of the scaffolding. Paco Aznar, carried the broadcast of "Amagatall de la Festa", whose gathering we celebrated one day from the top floor of the scaffolding, with the participation of Pepa, D. Antonio Echeto and me. Also from there, the solemn moment of the signing of the mural was broadcast.

Visits from journalists were almost continuous. Reports appeared in the local and provincial press, with articles and interviews by Ximo Lloréns, Mario Candela, Antonio Revert, Adrián Espí, Floreal Moltó, Antonio Castelló, Adrián Miró, Pepe Ferrer, Mari Ángeles Arazo and Pepe Pascual.

Once the left side was finished, I began to paint the central part. Paco Picó, had painted the strip that imitated the white marble of the mouth, on which the partygoers would rest. The first was an *Aragonese*, in which I portrayed Javier Rufino Valor, smiling, affable as he is, with his great humanity, quiver on his shoulder and his left hand resting on his partner, the representative of the Alcodianos filà . Jacinto Santacreu Llorens. At his side, the *Montañés*, side by side , Javier Cabanes Vilanova, an ax on his shoulder pectoral with shiny scales and the characteristic shield covering part of his body. Next, Camilo Vercet Molina, representing the *Tomasinas*, serious, circumspect, with an expectant face. At his side, the poet and good friend, Adrián Espí, dressed in the finery of the Navarros costume , helmet, tights, the pectoral cross, chains and his gaze lost in the infinite spring of the Fiesta, which he feels as his own. At his side the journalist and friend Pepe Pascual, dressed as *Vasco*, who does not belong to the filà, but I took the license to dress him as a festive man. From the filà *Guzmanes*, I invented the character and then placed the donkey harnessed in harness and a Valencian blanket, and on his rump "Pedruchi", Pedro Antonio Guillem García, dressed as a *Labrador*, without a cap, –I didn't want to add fuel to the fire, because the dispute that took place in the line over the montera thing. And behind him, accompanying him on the saddle, the "masereta", dressed as a Valencian, Elisa Guillén de la Cruz. These figures project their shadow on the white marble plinth, breaking the horizontal. Following the line, my friend since childhood, Salvador Pastor Roca, "Tito", dressed as *Cid*, silver hat, chain mail, crimson cape with white back, smiling face, right hand on his belt and left holding the shield: silver, and a black eagle on a yellow background, which rests on the ground. Francisco Córcoles Ferrándiz, represents the *Asturian*, smiling and in profile, with the shield that bears the cross and the alpha and omega. The figure of the *Smuggler* is personified by Francisco Aznar Blanquer: black vest, richly embroidered with randa, cap, red tie over white shirt, wide blue sash that tightly cinches the waist, belt with a horseshoe, tight red satchel, harquebus under the arm, and the typical blanket with a rich strawberry tree border.

In the center of the composition, D. Ángel del Barrio, in memory of him, smiling and kind, dressed as *Mossén Torregrosa*, –that priest who wielded the small scythe to protect the walls of Alcoy from the Saracen attack, and defend

the Christian faith-. Starting from his figure, I began the placement of the Moorish faction, headed by José Luís Córcoles Bordera, dressed as a *Llanero*: musket on his shoulder and the typical cigar in his hand. His son-in-law, Roque Monllor Doménech, wears the Jewish costume, with the black leather breastplate, regulation at the official entrance. Another son-in-law of Córcoles, José L. Yvorra Ripoll, wears the *Domingo Miques* suit, a yellow blanket over his shoulder, and holding the arquebus that rests on the ground. In memory of the fact that José Luís Córcoles Bordera had dressed in Chano's costume in his youth, he asked me to paint his son representing the *filà*.

Remembering a great friend of my father, José Montava Espí, now deceased, a great person and a great partygoer who always wore the costume of the *Greens*, I asked the family for some photos so that his portrait would appear on the Mural de la Festa. And that's how I painted it: a white turban with a green ribbon and a white cape, a large pectoral with the Star of David, a yellow sash and green silk brocade pants.

My friend, Antonio Castelló, brought me some photos dressed in *Magenta*. He, at that time, was a librarian for the San Jorge Association, and I painted him dressed as a *magentero*, with the Association's medal around his neck, and a book in his hand, with a logo of the Lloréns Library. The medal is superimposed and attached to the wall with a small nail. The one from the *Cordón* row is José Carlos Pérez Gisbert.

One day a kind and simple person appeared on the scaffolding who said his name was Emilio Jorge Antolí Company, he asked me if I had someone to represent the Lighters, I said no, and with all naturalness he said: -Why don't you paint me? me?-. That made me laugh and I painted it on the mural, dressed as *Ligero*. Today he has passed away.

I only needed three *festeros* to complete the first term. I dressed Paco Picó, "Torrat", as a *Mudejar*. I had photographs of the suit, because my grandfather and my father, perhaps around the year 1915, belonged to that "filà". What I didn't have was the characteristic shield, Paco went to the "filà" and asked for one for me to copy, and the idea of superimposing it occurred to me, just like he did with the medal. Once the *Mudejar* was painted, Paco himself, with some plugs and screws, placed the shield on his figure, so that it seemed that he was holding it with his arm.

José María Segura Martí, represents the *Marrakesch*: dressed in a white tunic, a blue striped sash, a red vest and a golden ruff with a cascade of coins hanging from it. And finally, Paquito Aznar, dressed as *Benimerín*. He brought me a complete suit from his house so that I could copy it exactly. His figure is with one hand covering the sun that dazzles him and with the other, holding and collecting the large curtain that hangs from an upper beam, green and white, with the anagrams of the Association, a red cross and a yellow crescent. . . With this figure he had finished all the characters that occupied the first row of the composition.

Secondly I placed the horsemen. There are five partygoers mounted on horses, none of which is a portrait. On the left side of the viewer, there are an *Almogavar* and a *Mozárabe*, on white horses, and a *Cruzado*, on a black horse. On the right, the *Royalist*, and a *Berber*, on gray horses.

In the back right, next to Captain Moro, I reserved a special space for my *filà*, the *Abencerrajes*. There, mounted on a camel, a *festero* appears seated: with a white turban, a white wool cape, a yellow tunic with green stripes, a pectoral and metal cuffs, a blue sash and a leather shield with two stars of David, red tassels, a crescent gold and the anagram in Arabic of *Abencerrajes*. He carries a spear with the pennant-script, of the "row". This character is my self-portrait. Frowning brow, white beard, looking towards the group of partygoers who occupy the central part of the chapel.

Next to this camel, I placed another. When I was preparing the sketches, I wanted to place on this second camel, that kind of palanquin or tent that some dromedaries carry, and that generally protect women. But he did not know what it was like, nor what shape it had. I dedicated myself to going through those embassies where I supposed they could give me some information: the embassy of Morocco, the one of Sudan, the one of the Arab Emirates and the one of the Republic of Iran, in which they searched me. But none of them could define or explain what I was looking for. But chance settled the matter. One afternoon, the film "A Thousand and One Nights" was broadcast on TVE-1, with María Montez, John Hall and Sabú and Pepa recorded it. When I got home, he told me that the palanquin thing had already been solved. Towards the middle of the film a camel appears with what I was looking for. I stopped the tape, made a drawing and thus made the sketch for the mural. On this second camel, the palanquin was occupied by two Moors.

One is the portrait of a classmate from the Simancas institute, Carmen Galiana Sánchez, an excellent friend, who was also from Jijona.

To finish the mural, I only needed the right part, dedicated to the day of the battle, with the arquebusiers. –In the initial sketch, there were some musicians, but the composition was poor and I thought, along the way, to give the theme greater grandeur. In the Official Festival Program, from 1980, there is a photo of Ensign Cristiano from the *Almogávares filà*, which Rogelio Vaello Vañó held that year, in a splendid suit, firing an arquebus. But I made a composition on the mural, and I placed Lieutenant Cristiano, with the portrait of José Aura Payá, and a companion who is preparing the arquebus for him, with the portrait of Antonio Vicedo Fierro. Several figures shooting between the smoke and the castle of the festivities, which I incorporated into the set, closing the composition. On the battlements of the castle, among the dust and in the blue of the sky, there is a small red balloon, which some child escaped. With this little note I concluded the mural and signed it "Castañer, 1993".

Just needed to varnish it. But this time we had no compressor. The good old Paco Picó, with the simplicity that characterizes him, told me that he would varnish the mural and with a brush and a can of varnish, he did so.

As the previous time, the mural was covered with some cloth, waiting for its inauguration and the scaffolding was removed.

Two commemorative plaques were placed. In one it says: "Ramón Castañer painted. They collaborated: Juan Rufino, Francisco Aznar, Francisco Picó".

And in the other, "This mural was made under the auspices of the Córcoles family – Ferrándiz in memory of his parents.

On the marble of the plinth was superimposed, in bronze letters, "SAVE YOUR TOWN-PATRON SAINT"

I returned to Madrid and joined the institute. Meanwhile, in Alcoy, Antonio Castelló, prepared the inauguration. He looked for Jorge Antonio Linares, as head of protocol and drew up the script with the order of the interventions.

On Saturday, February 13, 1993, at eight in the afternoon, the presentation and blessing of the "**Mural de la Festa**" took place. It was a massive and beautiful act, with the assistance of a large representation of municipal and ecclesiastical authorities, the Association of S. Jorge, the Assembly and other official bodies of our city of Alcoy.

Antonio Castelló acted as master of ceremonies, and opened the session by reading some notes, in which *he said "(...) you don't necessarily have to look at history in a past way, which is, most of the time, the natural way approach to it, but also, as we have seen, conjugating in the present is necessary. and today in*



*On this occasion, in this act, we will have to transfer to successive generations the spiritual representation of what happened here."*

Then he gave way to the Director of the Salesians, D. Antonio Echeto, who welcomed the attendees, to later discover the mural. The curtains were slowly lowered, controlled by students from the school, and the people who filled the church burst into applause.

Antonio Revert was the next to speak. He read a beautiful text in which he poetically exposed the characteristics of the mural, praising my geometric wisdom, he said: *"To make a mural, to have perspective, to achieve these foreshortenings, which we see today in this work, Ramón has proven to be a good geometer. Therefore, we sincerely believe that he has achieved mastery"...* And he ended by saying: *"We finally anticipate, that Castañer has kept in mind when painting this altarpiece, Goethe's advice: "Take reality into account, but rely on it one foot." You will see, then, realism, impressionism, hyperrealism. There is everything in the palette of the master of painting, but above all, you will observe poetry and dreams.*

*Let us conclude with this affirmation: The work of his hands proclaims the cosmogony of the party".*

Subsequently, Auxiliary Bishop D. Rafael Sanus addressed the public, saying: *"Rarely before in my life have I felt so much joy in the face of a blessing."* He highlighted the Salesian tradition of Alcoy, and recalled the many Alcoyans who have come out of their classrooms in formation, he said *" : we are all on the mural, those who appear represented on it represent all of us in turn"*

Immediately afterwards, he blessed the painting with the usual prayers.

The Polyphonic Choir directed by Eduardo Terol, my nephew and Francisco Amaya, They performed several very appropriate pieces for the act.

Then Pepa, my wife, with her warm voice, with command of gestures and her knowledge of being before an event that she felt as much as I did, recited several poems related to the Alcoyan festival and by Alcoyan authors: José Cuenca Mora, Joan Valls, Adrián Espí, Gonzalo Cantó and Adrián Miró.

The Provincial Inspector of the Salesians, Cándido Orduña, with his words highlighted the firm ties of union that the Salesians maintain in Alcoy. Praising the realization of the beautiful mural in a Salesian church.

Once again, the Choir closed the act by interpreting the hymn to Saint George, "Insigne Mártir", which we accompanied, singing all those attending the act.

In the summer of 1993 we made the trip through Andalusia with four cities of residence, from which we organized our visits, to see neighboring towns and places: Córdoba, Seville, Cádiz and Granada.

We already knew Córdoba. But we remember our honeymoon trip and we went back to visit those places that had been so dear to us and that continued to be so beautiful. On this occasion, since we were traveling by car, we were able to visit the ruins of "Medina -Azahara", with all its monumentality, and the beauty of its gardens. And we move to some typical Cordoba towns such as: Bujalance, Andujar, Montoro...

The second place was Seville, which we also knew, but to which it is always interesting to return, and we had places that we had not visited such as the Alcázar, with the famous Patio de las Muñecas and Patio de las Doncellas; The palace of San Telmo, La Cartuja and the baths of María de Molina. Here they told us a funny

anecdote: –According to the legend, King Pedro I the Cruel, when he invited his friends, it was a forced visit to admire the place where his favorite maidens were bathing and forced his visitors to drink from that water served in silver cups, but one of the nobles refused the invitation. The King, angry, drew his sword, but the nobleman replied: "Your Majesty, I do not want to try it, because while drinking the broth, I could crave the partridge."

From Seville we visit the towns of Carmona, Écija, Marchena. Andalusian people are charming and friendly. If we asked something they went out of their way to explain it to you or accompanied you. Listening to them, it seemed to us at times, was listening to a Quintero character, with his funny face and his peculiar lisp.

Cádiz was the next point. There reigns Aeolus. A strong wind always blows. We visited the city and its surroundings. Puerto de Santa María, where we ate abundant seafood in the famous house of the "Romerijos".

Jerez, so stately, where we visited the Royal School of Equestrian Art, to attend a horse show. Then the Andrés de Ribera Foundation, with its splendid clock museum. It was impressive to hear the machinery of so many clocks and the time to strike the hours, all kinds of bells, bells, chimes and gongs, ringing at the same time. We saw the much-discussed cathedral of Palmar del Río, only from the outside and from afar, because there, of course, they do not allow visits.

Arcos de la Frontera, a magnificent town in Jerez with the supposed mill of the famous miller of the "Three-cornered Hat".

The reserve of "Doñana" and the hermitage of El Rocío, was a special visit. There were a lot of people. We went in to pray to the Virgin and heard the *salve rociera* sing.

Before leaving Cádiz, we went to see the Sherry port, and the spectacle of the yachts, so splendid, so millionaires, so shiny. Amazing!

And finally Granada. with the obligatory visit to the Alhambra, with its Wine Gate and the Judiciary, the room of two Sisters, the courtyard of the lions, Comares Tower, the Queen's Boudoir, and the Generalife Gallery. There we met some friends from Madrid. When one is visiting a city and meets friends, it's great if you have an affinity with them, and we had it with Juan Ruiz de Torres and his wife Ángela Reyes and their daughter Joana. We talked long and hard, we went into a cafe, we had some beers and we toasted to the pleasant

meeting.

At night Sacromonte, with assistance to a gypsy zambra show: guitars, faralaes, flamenco singing and dancing. A whole representation.

We walk through the famous streets of the Albaicín, with its mystery and charm. Then the Royal Chapel of Granada, with the crypt and the museum of the Catholic Monarchs.

We bought some souvenirs in the Moorish street of La Alcaicería, what better. It looks like the street of a Moorish neighborhood in Tetuán.

On the way home we stopped in Jaén. It was unbearably hot. We saw little. The cathedral and the main square and we left for Madrid

The following year, I know that someone promoted that all those portrayed in the "Mural de la Festa" offer me a tribute dinner, which took place on May 6, 1994, in the halls of the *filà Ligeros*.

We met in the church of María Auxiliadora, and they took our ritual photo at the foot of the mural, of all of us who appeared on it, and then another, with the companions who joined the dinner.

A magnificent program was published, with a sketch drawing of the mural with numbering of all the characters portrayed, in a total of 45. A great photo of the

pictorial set, with two comments by Antonio Revert and Antonio Castelló. And on the last page, the photograph of the central part of the work, with the Relic and its companions, and a text that says: "*El Mural de la Festa*" offers us a global and updated vision of the iconography of the Fiesta de Alcoy. , and at the same time it constitutes the greatest artistic contribution of Ramón Castañer to his town and his Patron S. Jorge.

*The mural is an oil on canvas that covers and decorates two hundred square meters of the apse of the Altar of S. Jorge, located in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians that the Salesian community protects in the city of Alcoy.*

*Ramón Castañer Segura, its author, began work on July 3, 1992 and the work was blessed on February 13, 1993.*

*Its realization was possible thanks to the patronage of the Córcoles family. Ferrándiz, with the manifest desire to perpetuate the memory of his parents."*

During dinner, the presentation was led by Antonio Castelló and Paco Aznar. I was frankly excited to see myself surrounded by so many friends. Several colleagues took the floor, with good humor and admiration for my work. Adrián Espí Valdés, read some sonnets:

### **To Ramón Castañer, painter and friend**

Yo

The apse is blue. Spring has emerged  
with gesture and laughter.  
The Fiesta breaks with all its haste of the  
most Moorish and enchanting afternoon.

In the apse is the holy rider -knight  
on an exalted horse-.  
The saint who does not hurt and has  
won with arrow, quiver and pinwheel.

The Fiesta is spilled in its colors, clear  
water cistern with a thousand flowers in  
Aurora de Abril and swallow.

It is the freshest rose and deployed  
basket of extinguished gunpowder  
in warp of lily and serpentine.

II

The stage is wide, like a most beautiful bed.  
Beautiful hemisphere where the  
Fiesta lives its mystery to my flesh  
and to my chest.

And that Georgina light and  
saetera paradigm of deep emotions,  
like guzlas, legends, traditions,  
intoxicating passion of a strong bonfire.

This Sistine of burning gunpowder in  
textures of rapturous light orgy  
of enthusiastic illusion

It is the deep poem, the seed that  
translates the Fiesta into being divine  
to the mane caught by destiny.

### III

Knight and horse are drawing and  
heralds and maceros melody.  
The Fiesta is painted day by day  
with secrecy, with a leprechaun and with a spell.

There are the screams, in the sky.  
The flags, the pennants, banners; the  
crescents, crosses and squadrons and the  
athlete angels in their flight.

And the pupils full of beauty: the  
child, the woman. Delicacy in this  
transformed Spring.

The ostentatory Gothic, architecture  
that sustains the faith. Tone and  
painting of the best and most prayed prayer.

### IV

Now let me tell you, friend, with auroral  
music and sound, rainbows and dawn,  
warm nest, that good wheat is  
green in your fields.

And I want to point out to you with  
determination and the smell of thyme  
and the smell of linden that your aesthetics and  
your style drag me into the prosperous frenzy of sleep.

Let the emotion speak to you  
illuminated the apse and palpable  
the verse of the brush and its harmony.

Moors, Christians, angels, doves...!!  
On the stage of the Fiesta you show  
a feeling of pure alcoyanía.

In the end, I gave my thanks making the words of "Fumío Haruyama" my own: "Only Love and Friendship, go beyond Time". To finish wishing that one day we could all be, body and soul, in the presence of S. Jorge, as we are in the work of the mural.

They gave me, as a souvenir, a silver tray with the name of each one, the character they represent, and everyone's autograph signature.

It was a wonderful and unforgettable evening.



## CHAPTER XII

*The reflective line,  
motionless, severe  
grace of an austere  
column that sings, pensive.*

*Raphael Alberti*





In the summer of 1994, our trip was to get to know the Catalan Romanesque. The routes that Carmen traced for us were these: Lérida and its surroundings. 2nd, From Solsonés to Andorra. 3<sup>a</sup>, La Noguera, Conca de Tremp, Vallés, Bohí, Noguera Pallaresa, Cardós, Aigües Tortes National Park, Lake San Mauricio. 4th, Osona, El Ripollés, La Cerdanya. 5th, Ripio, Olot, Besalú, Figueras, Girona.

To make this tight trip, we took four places of residence: Lérida, Barcelona, Vich, and Aigua Blava.

We left Madrid at mid-morning, on our way to Zaragoza, and from here to Lleida. The first day, as always, we dedicated to getting to know the city and our first visit was to the Seu Vella de Lleida. A large Romanesque-Gothic construction, with its hexagonal tower and large Gothic cloister. The magnificent carving of Cristo de la Seu, from the 12th century, decorates one of its austere walls. Then, the church of San Lorenzo, with its characteristic façade and the door with abundant archivolt.

An interesting exhibition on the work and life of the musician Federico Monpou was installed in Lérida, in which sheet music, concert photographs, and commemorations were collected, and his music provided the setting for the exhibition. Very interesting!

The next day, we went out to see the surroundings. The Barony of San Oisme, a small hermitage in the purest Romanesque style. The tower of the castle of Mur, important ruins that tell us about a stately Romanesque. To visit the church and monastery of Santa María de Mur, we had to go to Tremp de la Guardia and the bailiff of the town hall gave us the keys to enter. It was impressive to hear the noise of the lock and the creak of the door that was lost in an echo, hollow and three-dimensional, inside the lonely church. We looked like two twelfth-century monks coming in to chant. The gloom was mysterious and its coolness contrasted with the sultry outside. Afterwards we went out to the small cloister, the poor, neglected, tangled garden gave it a brittle charm, like a dried rose petal inside a book. The sun played with the arches and their shadows, small and harmonious, glided lazily over the rotten and stark stone floor. There was a placidity that, together with the silence, only alternated by the whispering breeze and the chirping of a solitary bird, fascinated us.

Above, the great belfry of the church with its two ancient bells and in the background a door giving access to a small cemetery surrounded by a wall of rough stones. Someone, as if in a soft caress, had deposited some flowers on the rusty and twisted cross of a grave. They were still recent, fresh, and with their brilliant colors they gave a little joy to that funereal austerity, rough and neglected.

Then we visit the impressive Romanesque church of Covet, a magnificent example of Catalan Romanesque. On the lintel of the door, two hieratic, geometric angels hold the mandorla with the Pantocrator inside. Some rudimentary archivolt surround the Divine Majesty. The first, with the twelve Biblical elders; the second, decorated with small seated figures that conform to the curve of the arch; the third, a narrow molding with geometric-vegetal elements; the fourth, with prophets and in the last archivolt various figures, coarse and coarse placed radially. Above, a rotten cornice decorated with the canillos and above it a simple octo-lipped rose window, with some floral-type stained glass windows. Inside, the church is simple and humble, rather dark, with a magnificent carving of the

Virgin of Covet, and a stall for liturgical objects and among them, the joys of the Virgin.  
"Goigs a lloança del naixement de Maria Santísima".

*Puix glorious, heu esclatat in  
our heart. Rosa Pia in  
vostra Nativitat us  
venerem, or Mary.*

Then followed by Bell Puig de les Avellanes, a Romanesque complex that still functions as a priestly college. Bell Puig de Urgell, with the cloister of San Bartolomé. Near Isona, Llorda, with its castle of Abella de la Conca.

We arrived in Barcelona on a hot day in July. We stopped a taxi, so that in front of my car, it would take us to the hotel. We already knew Barcelona, as we had been several times, but there are always things to discover in this beautiful city.

The Gothic quarter is always a must visit, Casa Arcediano and the old Canonja. Its streets, shops and businesses and the cathedral.

It is not a model gothic cathedral. It's big, with many later styles mixed in. It began in 1298, a plan with three naves with side chapels. Its transept does not extend outwards and the main altar is surrounded by the ambulatory. There is a gallery of large windows that illuminate the naves with tinted stained glass windows. The dome is octagonal in plan. The altarpiece is from the 15th century. There is a crypt with the remains of Santa Eulalia, a Roman martyr. In the Sacramento chapel is the image of the Christ of Lepanto. The main façade is graceful and its cloister from the 14th-15th centuries is surrounded by chapels closed with beautiful bars.

In the eastern corner, there is a fountain, under a temple with a star-shaped vault and on the keystone is the image of Saint George, patron saint of Catalonia.

In the heart of the neighborhood is the Plaza del Rey, with the Archive of the Crown of Aragon and the remains of an old Royal Palace to which the Tinell room and the Santa Àgueda chapel belong. It is also located there, the Museum of History of Barcelona.

In the Catalan Plaza de San Jaime, beautiful, stately, the Palace of the Generalitat and the Casa de la Ciudad, with the Salón de Ciento, a meeting point for medieval corporations.

Then we visit Gaudí art. We did what we could call the Gaudí tour. One of the first projects

by this architect was the Parque de la Ciudadela. In 1878 he established contact with Count Güell, projecting the reform of his house. Later he built the house of Manuel Vicens, with great influence of the Mudejar style. In 1884 construction began on the large temple of La Sagrada Familia, in a very peculiar style. It seeks beauty in the structure of the forms to which it unites an original decoration and provides great lighting effects. It has the grandeur of Greek architecture combined with the trembling subtlety of Gothic. It twists the straight lines and joins them to the curves, submitting them to the architectural demands and all the elements. on the whole, they are subordinated to the broad structural forms.

In 1885, he built the aforementioned Güell house, and from 1889–1904, the Calvet house; The Miralles fence, in Las Corts; The Batlló house; The Milá house, known as the "Pedrera"; and in 1914, the original and incomparable Park Güell was completed.

Despite being a great genius, his personality was little known in his time. He died hit by a tram, in 1926, and spent five days in the mortuary, without anyone knowing his identity.

On our visit to the Sagrada Familia, we were able to admire the majestic elevation of its characteristic towers. We are impressed by the magnificence of the Nativity façade, with the birth of the Child, the adoration of the shepherds, the Magi, angels, virgins and heavenly musicians. Later, the austere façade of the Passion, with the discussed passion figures, due to the sculptor Subirach. We ascended the spiral stairs, we went down the smooth ramps between stone latticework and multiple rose windows. We left impressed by that colossal stone mass.

Then to Montserrat, with its tormented and cathedral landscape.  
all its dependencies and the Moreneta.

*April rose. Morena of the mountains  
From Montserrat estel.  
Il-lumineu la catalana terra  
Guieu-nos cap al cel  
Guieu-nos cap al cel.*

We placed some red candles in the chandelier and began the return to Barcelona.

Park Güell, with its whimsical undulations tessellated with shapes multicolored. Witty silhouettes of strange monsters and chimeras.

One day, it occurred to me to track down a friend from the military, Juan Badía Campabadal. I knew he was from Caldas de Montbuy, so I got a phone book and dedicated myself to calling all the Badías. I was lucky that on the third call his wife, Lola, answered me. I told him who I was, because we already met in Alcoy, when they were on their honeymoon. It was a great joy, Juan got on and we agreed to see each other. They came to the hotel, and this was the beginning of a new friendship contact that would never be broken again.

We only had to discover the Olympic Barcelona. They put us on a catamaran, together with a bunch of Japanese people, and gave us a tour of the most significant places in the Olympic Village.

The third point of residence, Vich, in the beautiful hostel on the Sau reservoir. We visit the cathedral, rebuilt after the fire of 1937. We admire the paintings of José María Sert. According to what the sacristan told us, Sert painted the canvases of the cathedral three times. Back in the twenties, he was commissioned some canvases that would decorate the upper part of the cathedral. When the work was finished, a French magnate proposed to the painter the acquisition of the entire work for twice what he was going to receive, Sert accepted the offer and returned to paint the commission for the church with new compositions.

The cathedral was looted and burned during our war, losing all the paintings. At the end of this, and rebuilt the cathedral, he was commissioned new paintings, which are what we can admire in the cathedral today.

Sert's work is characterized by its colossal composition, and the originality of capturing a series of figures in sepia tone on large golden canvases, wrapped by large crimson draperies, on evangelical and biblical themes. "The Allegory of the Apostles, Saint Simeon and Saint Jude", begins the series of these great

canvases; It is followed by "Humanity in struggle with Death" thus up to 15 large canvases, ending with an impressive "Calvary" on the main altar.

Sert's body is buried in the cloister of the cathedral.

We were in the Episcopal Museum, the most important ecclesiastical museum in all of Spain. It was formed with contributions from the church, the municipality and private collections. It has 20 rooms. The great representation of Romanesque art is found in his works, both in painting and sculpture. Eighty splendid pieces show the wall paintings of Sant Sadurní d'Osormont, Sescort, El Brull, as well as a "Sant Sopà", from the 13th century, from Urgell Cathedral.

In Gothic art, there is a great representation of sculptures: images of Christ, the Virgin, and saints, which alternate with portals, altarpieces, and sarcophagi. In painting, there are works by Ferrer Bassa, Pere Serra and Juan Gascó, among others.

The collection is completed by important fabrics, embroidery, ceramics, stamps, goldsmiths and reliquaries.

Then we visit the region of Osona, where the representation of the Romanesque is important in the towns of Brull, Tabernoles, Mallá, Tavertet, Rupit, Ripoll, San Joan de les Abadesses, Camprodon, Beget...

In most of these towns, the Catalans have known how to preserve the age of the buildings, rebuilding, restoring and conditioning large houses, farmhouses, streets, bridges, churches, giving them a medieval appearance without losing their own autonomy. There are small

towns, such as Pal, where Small craft shops had set up on the ground floors, and you could find potters and goldsmiths, tanners and espadrille makers. Herbalists who offered almost miraculous ointments and herbs. Beekeeping stalls with honey of different kinds. Any house could be a perfect museum of farm objects, domestic machines, peasant costumes. A whole world that, before it was lost, was gathered, recovered and shown so that we would know what their ancestors had been like. And this gives a flavor to the towns, of good work, of having "seny", as the Catalans say.

Naturally, in all the small towns traditional restaurants had been installed, with their own food and tastings from the land. A marvel of good food.

We travel to Girona to visit its great cathedral which is accessed by a steep staircase and the city, which Gironella describes in his work "The cypresses believe in God". We visit the museum of the "Manaies", where the clothing of the Roman legions of Holy Week is exhibited. And the great museum of the "Garrotxa"

The trip to Olot, we found it frankly exciting. The journey was incredible. The road skirted slopes and ravines with exuberant vegetation. Trees with shiny emerald green leaves, polished by the recent rain that accompanied us. All shaded by leaden clouds that gave the environment a Transylvanian aspect. A musical tape was playing in the car, Respighi's "Butantan", which describes a snake farm in Sao Paulo, and which suited the environment like a glove. The sound of the bells, the heaviness of the melody and the drama of the landscape created in us a mood of melancholy at the same time as placidity.

When we got to Olot, we talked to someone about the devilish layout of the road, and they told us that it had been built in the time of Primo de Rivera and that it was still perfect, with many curves, but perfect!

As the last point of our stay, we went to the Aiguablava Parador. Of modern construction on a cliff on the Costa Brava. There was no Romanesque there. We had beautiful beaches, tourists, and a small harbor with sloops, yachts, and barges. From there we went to La Bisbal, with its castle, the lake of Banyoles, the ruins of Ampurias and the small town of Tamariu.

We had left the Dalí museum in Figueras for last. And there we went. But when we got to Palafurguell, our car broke down. We had to look for a workshop and several hours passed while they carried out the repair, which we spent touring the small town of Josep Pla. At five in the afternoon we started the march towards Figueras.

The "Dalí Museum" is a large egg building. With a huge spherical dome, "the Galatea Tower" that suffocates the entire complex. The interior let us down. After seeing the seriousness, harmony and good work of the Romanesque, that seemed to us like a cinematographic montage. The entrance leads us to a large interior patio where there is a huge American car, Studebaker type, black, shiny, on which rests a huge female nude, tinged with gold that gives the whole the appearance of a low-class Valencian falla. The rest of the museum, the same. Little squares, little sketches and nothing else. Quite a disappointment.



## CHAPTER XIII

*The Moorish king  
walked through the city  
of Granada From Elvira's  
gate To Bibarrambla's  
gate Ay de mi Alhama!*







*Ramon Castaner. 1942*

I didn't know the Moors and Christians festivities until the year 1940. As I have said before, in my house there was always a recent mourning. Mourning was very different then than it is now. The mourning lasted three years. The first year of rigorous black. The women, completely in black: dresses, blouses, jackets, skirts, coats, stockings and shoes, and also, whether it was summer or winter, a mantilla, called a mantle, of black gauze, from the head to the ankles. For men, a black suit, black tie, black socks and shoes. There were those who changed the mother-of-pearl buttons on their shirts for black buttons. And the right thing was to go a month without shaving. The second year, the women wore the cloak to the waist and the men could wear a gray suit with a black bracelet on the left sleeve of the jacket. The third was considered half-mourning, and women wore the headscarf only and lightened the black with small white touches, and men were allowed to wear a black tie.

In my house the mourning followed one another quickly. And the correct thing was that for S. Jorge parties, the family would leave Alcoy to avoid the madding crowd of festive merriment. But what was shocking was that once outside of Alcoy and in an unknown city, life was normal.

I remember some festivities from before the 1936 war, when boards, old chairs, and boxes of soft drinks were placed on San Nicolás Street and on the sidewalk of the Glorieta to ensure people had a place at the Tickets on the first day. That was "no man's land" and everyone's.

They also put some stalls in the "Font Redona" square. Everything was sold there for the children. Rubber balls, "*rubber balls that come and go and are never lost*", had a long rubber band tied to the skin of the casing and placed on the ring finger to bounce off the palm of the hand.

Candies, trinkets, sugar cane, whole or broken coconuts, a kind of cigarette, -the "mataquintos"-, little wax horses, celluloid glasses, and a kind of twisted wire through which a tin propeller slid, that when pushed with force upwards it flew away. Everything was mixed together, Abyssinian war cards and some apples, dipped in sugar, shiny and shiny.

But my parents had planned a five-day trip, the ones that lasted for the holidays. We were in mourning and we went to Barcelona, again to the Hotel Imperial, but there was no rigorous mourning there. My mother would take off her gauze cloak and we would go out to the movies or the theater. I remember seeing a movie about the French Revolution, a play called "La Trapera", the zarzuela "Molinos de viento". Later we returned to Alcoy, the streets still had traces of the festivities. Worn, coiled, tangled and discolored streamers moving in the breeze, they seemed to greet me nostalgically. 1940 was the first year of

festivities since 1936. My father went out as a Moor in the filà *Marrakesch*, and he dressed me in a filà suit. I was happy, I did not fit in me with joy. I went out to the Entrada de Moros, which started at 4 in the afternoon from the "Partidor", on top of a horse. But after a while the horse spread its legs and began to piss, and people got up from their seats, for the stream was splashing on them, and they began to laugh. That cut me off from the "Arabian Nights" reverie, and the rest of the show no longer helped me.

In the year 1941, my father changed friends and changed lines. That year the party belonged to the *Guzmanes*, and they dressed me as *Guzmán*. Gray tunic with leather trimmings, a white skirt, wide leather belts studded with square-headed nails, thick gray leggings, and white sandals, which hurt like hell. Garnet velvet cape and since I was too small to wear a helmet, they put me in a red beret.

That year it came out at the Christian Entrance. So it started at 10 in the morning from the square of the Virgen de los Desamparados, -la plaçeta dels Civils-.

There I met a friend from the course, Paco Vilaplana, -we were both studying first in high school- and they put us on a horse. But the nag had bad tempers, he reared up and there we found our bodies on the ground. Paco, dislocated his shoulder and they removed it. I would have preferred to dislocate something, but without asking my opinion they put me on top of another nag and the parade. Little by little, I calmed down and finished the parade on the back of the nag.

On the day of the Alardo, visit to the Oliver Civil Hospital, with the usual photo on the steps of the entrance door, where almost all the members of the filà appear photographed.

In 1942, once again, my father had a new social gathering. On this occasion, in "Apolo", "-Centro Recreativo Musical"-, where the *Abencerrajes* were located, and naturally, they made me the Abencerraje costume. Yellow tunic with green stripes, light blue silk sash with red stripes and a large bow. Cuffs and breastplate in nickel-plated brass, -made for me by a plumber from Calle S. Francisco, Rafael, "the

affable"- . Brown socks, like the shirt. Brown leather sandals with obtrusive ribbons down the legs, and a white hat with a metal egg in the center. Simple shoulder bag, made of leather with cut fringes and a green crescent moon and a white wool cape.

That year I also went out to the "Entrada de Moros", but not on horseback, but on foot, spear at the ready and to the beat of the Moorish march. Slowly, with a fictitious cigar, we went down the slope of S. Nicolás towards the square. So, the Entrance ended at the door of the church of S. Jorge.



*Moorish entrance. Abencerrajes.*

*1954 From left to right: Ramón Castañer, José Carbonell, Santiago Candela, Rafael Botella, Jorge Mira, Jorge Pérez, Rafael Gosálbez (Fafa). Spain Square (Alcoy).*

This year, my father already formalized my belonging to the filà as an individual, a member of it. I remember that he was Captain of the *Abencerrajes*. Francisco Pérez Torres, "Sou". Mounted on a white steed, wearing a sultan's costume and covered by a large parasol carried by a slave.

That was the first link in a long chain that would join me, almost continuously, for many years, to the *Abencerrajes*.

The first year I went out shooting. My father rented a small arquebus for me and a worker from his factory was my "cartridge holder". He carried the box with the gunpowder and the small measure to load the arquebus, and I carried the pistons in a leather bag. For many years, "Quico" was my companion, he loaded the arquebus with gunpowder and I put the piston, and when it was my turn, I fired. We formed long lines. The first to shoot was the "Primer -Tro", -which is like the president- and then, one by one, the rest of the partygoers, until the last one, who is usually the oldest, the "Cop".

I soon had a friend, Salvador Pastor Roca, a fellow student, who also wore the abencerraje costume. Together we have paraded in the Moorish Entrance, in the Saint's procession and in battle. We would go to the fair together, and we would meet the girls to go out. There we all went to the "Teatro Soria", a

a kind of barracks installed at the fair, where a variety show delighted the public.

I remember the first year we went out to La Diana. At half past six in the morning I went to pick up Tito Pastor, who lived on S. Mauro street, and together we went to Apolo. There they had gathered us at seven, to review ourselves, we had a coffee with churros and a "herberet", and at eight in front of the Town Hall. When it was our filà's turn, we were all lined up, side by side, and Pepe Sanz, the corporal, marking our pace, and to the beat of the paso doble, "Krouger", by Camilo Pérez Laporta, we started. We formed the squad, Ángel Llopis, Ramón Castañer, Emilio Aura, Eduardo Plá, Indalecio Carbonell, Pepe Botella, Ángel Cremades, Jorge Mira, Tito Pastor, and Miguel Payá.

What emotion I felt when I saw myself in the Dianer squad. He looked at the clear blue sky, without a cloud that heralded rain. In front of us, the festival castle with the Christian flag, and behind the castle the emptiness of the bell tower demolished in 1937. With a firm and graceful step we headed for Calle Mayor, San Miguel, Plaza de la Virgen de los Desamparados, Virgen María, de back to S. Miguel, we went up through Sto. Tomás, to enter L'Escola street, we went out to "Plaçeta les Gallines", we headed towards Mossen Torregrosa, and down S. Juan street, we went down to "Terrer", we entered S. Jorge street to Avd. del Generalísimo, S. Lorenzo street and we went up S. Francisco to S. Mateo, the Partidor and the final stretch, the lucid descent of S. Nicolás street, to arrive at Plaza de España around ten o'clock

Throughout the tour, we used to stop in front of the houses of some partygoers and we faced the squad, looking towards the balconies, to receive the applause of the people. And someone always came out with a box of cigars to give us, one for each individual and another for the music director.

During the first years of my membership in the Abencerrajes, the meal on the first day of the festivities was held in Jorge Mira's carpentry shop. But after eating well and drinking well, having to go up to the "Partidor" from where, at 6 in the afternoon, our fila started the Entrada de Moros, it really was a nuisance. Afterwards, it was thought of celebrating it in some premises on S. Vicente street. In this way and being close, we would go from the table to the street. And there it took place for many years.

At four o'clock the Moorish Entrance began. First, the Captain, with his escorts and the pageantry, with the line of charge, and then, all the other "files", in order of seniority. The Abencerrajes always came to form around 6 in the afternoon.

I remember that at the Entrada de Moros in 1944, we went down slowly, forming two lines on the sides, and from time to time, I would turn and see the squad falling behind rhythmically to the beat of the "Alhambra" march, and my father acting as cape.

My father lived the holidays intensely, but his responsibility and enthusiasm when he was a corporal was such that he remained sober during the meal. And when he took the saber to put himself in front of the squad, he had poise and security in his gestures.

Near the Plaza de España, someone from the public yelled at me – "Che, Castañeret! What sá fet la vostra escuadra? Indeed, I turned and saw the first Moors of the Marrakets filà that preceded ours. But of the squadron of the Abencerrajes with my father as a corporal, and the music band, not a trace. It seemed that they had volatilized.

Later I found out what happened. The Abencerrajes had fallen too far behind and there had been a break in the rhythm of the Entrada. Some

The managers decided to withdraw the squad along the side street of Santa Rita, where the formation broke up.

A General Meeting was called in the Association of S. Jorge on May 21, originating a great discussion. My father, Manuel Castañer, told the President, –  
And what would have happened if we did not comply with the order to withdraw? -. All attendees showed a good predisposition, and the meeting ended satisfactorily.  
Apologies were requested by both parties, although in the row, this event caused some discomfort.

It took me many years to have a position in the squad for the Moorish Entrance. Positions were filled by veterans, and seniority was a privilege. We young people had no choice. Almost every year they were the same, and the corporal was always Indalecio Carbonell Pastor or my father. And the squad used to be made up of: José Aura Lucas, Jorge Pérez, Santiago Candela, Simeón Pastor, Rafael Botella, Pepito Carbonell, Remigio Cremades, Miguel Abad, "Morellá", Jorge Mira, and sometimes others alternated. Bald Dolphin, was always the "beater corporal", mounted on a piebald mare.

The "Primitiva" band, as now, accompanied the Abencerrajes and Fernando de Mora was then its director. I personally met Gonzalo Blanes Colomer, a doctor and composer. I remember that once he was in the filà, to arrange the central part of the Moorish march "A la Meca", premiered in 1910, but which had a few bars in which the partygoers lost their senses. passed. I also attended the performance of the Moorish march "Abencerrajes y Cegrías", also by Gonzalo Blanes, which premiered in the "Glorieta" bandstand one afternoon in 1945.

In 1957, the Moorish march "Abencerrajes" (April Afternoon), by the friend Loving Blanquer Ponsoda, who was then "el chiquet d'Apolo".

In 1960, I attended the recording, at the "Goya" cinema, of the 33 ½ rpm record. "Ecos del Levante Español", by the band "Primitiva", directed by Fernando de Mora Carbonell. And this same director premiered, on April 7, 1963, in an extraordinary concert of festive music, at the Calderón Theater, at 11:30 a.m., a Moorish march by my close friend Francisco Llácer Pla, "Zoco esclavo", which is dedicated to my wife Precisely, this piece was revived in 2002, in a concert by the Beniarrés band, directed by my nephew Eduardo Terol Nadal, as a tribute to the late maestro Llácer Pla, and dedicated to his wife Carmen Perís and their children, present in the concert.

When talking about the Abencerrajes, I have a vivid memory of Julio Berenguer, already deceased, to whom I was united by a great friendship, as companions and as partygoers.

I remember that one year, they suspended the procession of the Saint, due to the rain. Julio and I went into a bar, when we left it was still raining. We, very serious, covered ourselves with two large balloons, like umbrellas, which, when collecting the rain, showered us. In this way, we went to a store where one of my works had been exhibited. And with a lot of joking we messed with the painting: -

"My goodness, what an ugly picture, who will have painted it?" -. The people crowded in the window, said – "It seems incredible, two partygoers like two pikes, messing with the painting. With how precious it is! You can see that they don't understand anything about painting.– They looked at us, somewhat contemptuously, and as if to convince us, they told us: "The painting is marvelous, and, furthermore, it is the Virgin of the Assumption for the Preventorio." Of course, I did not make myself known. Julio and I continue our march, trying to cover some girls with our umbrellas.

One day in 1944 my father came home and told me that in the row they didn't have any Saint George. I then began to paint and without any problem I managed a

stretcher with 81 x 54 cm canvas, and I made a copy of the painting of S. Jorge by the painter Laporta, with a pictorial license. I changed the suit of the Moor who appears seated protecting himself, in the foreground, and I dressed him as Abencerraje. The painting appeared in the hall, until its transfer of headquarters. Where a carving of the Saint was placed, and the work was returned to me.

In 1954, they had the Abencerrajes, the Lieutenant, who played José Payá Perez. I designed the suit, and the squad of blacks, in which one of each color was dressed, whose preparation was made by the "Insa" house in Valencia and also, the sketch of the pageantry costumes. –drawings that disappeared–.

In 1955, we had the Captain, who was Francisco Satorre Miralles, the "Ricachón". That year I drew all the sketches for the costumes: of the Captain, the pageantry and the squad of blacks, who were dressed in Indian-type pants in yellow suede, a short jacket of the same fabric, a green silk sash with a large bow, and an exotic turban. The squad corporal wore the same design in green and a yellow sash.

"These drawings also disappeared."

In 1963, I painted an oil painting with the official design of the filà, measuring 92 x 73 cm. The figure of an Abencerraje in a brave pose, spear over his shoulder, held with the right hand and the left grasping the cord of the sword that hangs from the neck. Yellow tunic with green stripes, blue sash with red stripes and the typical sandals. The painting has a warm color, a soft sunset in the background, in pinkish tones that contrast with the yellow of the tunic and the white of the cape. The stormy cloudscape toned in grays and mauves.

The first design in the row was an oil painting by Rafael Peidro Peidro, which Julio Berenguer had ceded to the Abencerrajes and which was returned to its owner when I painted this one.

In 1964, the girdle reform was proposed, which was very uncomfortable. They asked for my opinion and I, remembering the fastening of the military belt, I designed a leather sash, forming a large belt loop, with the old silk sash, and in front, a large buckle in the shape of a plate, with a hook clasp. on the inside. It was widely accepted for its comfort and because it had not lost the essence of the old girdle.

In 1967, thirteen years later, since the Benimerines filà did not yet exist, we had again, the Ensign. That year the position was held by Pepe Sanz Llopis, and he called me to talk about the suit. We exchanged ideas, and I made him a drawing, in tempera. I dressed the figure in a loose tunic, made of yellow ocher velvet, with a wide border, embroidered with silk threads in the colors of the filà costume: yellow, green, blue and red. To embroider it, we moved to Valencia. . Pepe wanted the embroideries to be done by hand, with the flowers and leaves in relief. And we order them in an embroidery workshop.

In a metallurgical company we ordered the ruff or gorget, metallic, with embossing in relief, like the wide cuffs. Chainmail shirt with a hood, and on the head, the wide white silk turban, with colored rhinestones and in the center the metallic and shiny half-egg. The shoes were boot-type with metal toecaps and heels, and a large curved cutlass with a wide handle.

This year, the filà edited a small program for which I made the cover. Gouache of a Moorish captain on a horse and a parasol. By the way, my wife had a literary collaboration in it: "Tres generaciones", three abencerrajes with the same last name. Manuel Castañer Abad, Ramón Castañer Segura and Ramón Castañer Botella and included a photograph of our son, who was five months old, dressed as an abencerraje, resting in his cart. Pepa prepared the suit and I made the sash and a small bag, hoping to surprise her parents and my mother.

1968 was the year of the Captain, represented by Jorge Mira Rovira. Program of acts of the filà, with my cover. A bust of an abencerraje with a huge reddish sun behind, in gouache paint.

In 1974, we had for the first time, the "Mig" squad. A special squad of black slaves, which, because it occupies half of the parade, is called the "Mig. I made a design on two cardboards, with gouache paint. The design was new, and original. A kind of yellow silk chasubles, talar in shape, with green applications. Black tights, with cane bracelets on the arms and ankles. Wide cape of white silk and a kind of shiny metal miter.

The realization was catastrophic. The silks of the tunics and cloaks were replaced by a cheap and soft fabric, and the embroidery was replaced by green fringe. The mitres, which were to be spectacular, were made of a matte, metallic plastic that gave them a depressing appearance. Better not remember.

In 1980, the second lieutenant was once again, who that year was Luis Mataix Arañó. I made the cover of the filà program. It is the pen drawing of a bulrush chair, with an abencerraje cape, cuffs and turban over the cape and the metallic gorget hanging from the chair.

And in 1981 I also made the cover of our program. A squad of the row at the entrance to the Moors, but with the symbolism that the party is made up of a group of individuals. I painted the first of the formation with the finished face and the rest of the body schematized, the second the hand, the third the shield, the fourth the suit and so on, until completing the set of all of them, a man, a partygoer .

But I no longer contributed to the realization of costume designs, or charges, or squads. So, many thousands were already paid to designers and I no longer entered into their calculations. All my contribution to the Party has been disinterested.

In 1989, in the ordinary session of January 26, I was designated a member of the General Assembly of the Association of San Jorge, as Mayor of Honor.

And on March 5, at a mass in the church of S. Jorge, the medal and insignia were awarded to me. Octavio Rico, as president of the Association, said in his words of presentation that the appointment of Mayoral was an honorary position for which people who have developed some cultural activity within the Association are proposed. And that my appointment was unanimously ratified in the Assembly.

For this reason, I received a letter from the Abencerrajes, signed by the "First Tro", Vicente Corbí Soler, congratulating me on the appointment, to which the entire filà joined.

And at that time, Rafael Romá, a great friend and abencerraje, organized a tribute dinner for me to give me the appointment of Honorary Abencerraje. The dinner was held in the Filà halls, without the consent of some, who logically did not attend, but I found myself surrounded by many friends. The first Tro intervened, with a few simple words and Rafael Romá, presented me with a framed parchment, with my appointment of Honorary Abencerraje. I said thank you, and I remembered my times as "creuá" in the filà, back in the year 1942. I narrated some anecdotes and mentioned some characters who have already disappeared, among them, my father and my father-in-law, the two great Abencerrajes. A Moorish march sounded, the saber was handed to me, and to the beat of the timpani we ended that pleasant night.

Years passed, and again in 1995, the Abencerrajes had the position of Captain, which Santiago Guillem assumed. A magnificent program was published that year

of which I made the cover. On a 50 x 35 cm cardboard, I painted in gouache a composition of various captains from the history of the filà. Five characters dressed in ancient costumes and in the foreground, a portrait of Pepe Sanz Llopis with the suit that I designed for him in 1967. Inside, my design for the filà from 1964 was reproduced, and a reproduction of part of the Mural of the Festa, precisely, in which the abencerraje appears, which is my self-portrait, mounted on a camel.

And it is curious, but despite so much participation, my name did not appear anywhere. In the index, the name of all the collaborators is reproduced, there were many that year, but they forgot mine. The cover had to be adjusted in size, and they cut off my signature. And the splendid reproduction of the mural did not deserve a letter to say where it was, or who the author was. Pure coincidence?

From this moment on, there was some misunderstanding between us that caused my break with the Abencerrajes. The truth is, the environment had become politicized.

My estrangement lasted until 2001. One day, while I was in Alcoy, a young man stopped me, who introduced himself as Indalecio Carbonell Pastor, First Trio, from the Abencerrajes. I knew their parents and even their grandparents, but having been away from Alcoy for so many years, contact with the new generations is lost. Kindly, he told me that he was sorry for my distance from the abencerrajes and that he would be very pleased to see me there again. And in the 2002 festivities, the day of the procession to S. Jorge, I went out in my position as Mayor of the Association, with my Abencerraje costume. Later, Pepa and I went to the dinner that the filà organizes in the tent of its headquarters. During dinner, I had to go to the bathroom, and to show me the place he accompanied me Vicente Corbí, as I passed through the room, I saw some of my covers framed and the Abencerrajes design that I made in 1962. For a moment, I thought it was a copy that someone had made, because he did not recognize my work, or at least did not remember it. As I saw it. Vicente told me that they had recently restored it, since the smoke from the cigarettes and the humidity had damaged it. What surprised me, at that moment, is that being my work and being alive, I was not consulted, and they gave the restoration to another. He gave me such courage that without thinking I told him, "You must remove it and this summer I will make you a new life-size design." Vicente told me, "And who will you paint?" Nobody, an Abencerraje, portraits always bring second consequences.

So I did it. I got on the phone with Indalecio and asked him for a complete suit to have it that summer in Agres, where he planned to carry out the work.

One afternoon in July, Indalecio Carbonell went up to the farmhouse and brought me the complete set: the current tunic, since mine was one of the old ones and the yellow color is more cadmium; a cape, the girdle, the fittings, a shield and a spear. Everything he had asked for. I already had some sketches about the figure and the placement of the Moor.

In the friendly chat that afternoon, he told Pepa and me that precisely in 2003 the centenary of the Abencerrajes foundation was celebrated. We didn't know. And he asked Pepa for a collaboration, to publish some of the songs that his father, Rafael Botella –great partygoer and good abencerraje– composed, coupling some letrillas, always in a humorous tone, to fashionable songs.

Pepa, was very affectionate and began to look for material that she kept from her father, and what she had thought of to make an article, ended up being compiled in a little book. It includes photographs and anecdotes of his father, and his love for music, the Apolo Society and the Abencerrajes. I made the cover with a drawing



of my father-in-law at the entrance to the Moors. And my nephew, Eduardo Terol, compiled music on dictation, the songs to which the letrillas were attached: "La cruz de guerra", from the 1920s, "La gallina papanatas"; the parade of "La Alsaciana"; "Where do you come from brunette"; "Go-go ghosts"; "Carnations"... And the little book was ready for publication.

I painted a magnificent Abencerraje. Standing, wearing the suit, the cloak rolled on the arm whose hand holds the upright spear, and the other, taking the small dagger that hangs from the wide sash. On the face, youth and a slight smile. It represents any individual of the filà, and all the Abencerrajes. Shield on the ground, about to leave for the act of Glory, or to Diana.

On December 13, in the meeting room of the filà, an emotional act was held presided over by the President of the Association of San Jorge and abencerraje, Rafael Romá; by the President of the Society "Apollo; by the First Deputy Mayor and Party Councilor, Jorge Sedano; by the Councilor for Social Services, Mr. Castañer; by the First Trio of the Abencerrajes, Indalecio Carbonell; and Peppa and me.

The act began with some warm words from the first Tro recalling anecdotes and the trajectory of the abencerrajes for a century. Then Francisco Payá Martí, Abencerrajes and member of the S. Jorge Association, presented the splendid book "50 years of Black Squads", then Pepa presented "Cançonetes als Abencerrajes". With an emotional voice he remembered his father, Rafael Botella, and even sang some of his songs. And finally, the first Tró and I headed to the center of the room, where my painting was still covered, we discovered Abencerraje to the applause of all those who filled the assembly hall. I explained my intention and the characteristics of the work, and in a good mood we ended up singing an already popular coplilla by my father-in-law.

*The line of the  
Abencerrajes Believe that  
what I give  
is true, we are always in a  
good mood because friendship reigns.*



## CHAPTER XIV

*Nobody is guilty. You shoot and burn until you leave the world in ruins and at the same time you are completely innocent.*

*Herman Hesse*



For a long time I had been attracted to the transcendental event in the history of Alcoy known as the "Petrolio". I was very surprised that, being such a representative political episode of the 19th century, no artist from Alcoy had treated the event plastically. Perhaps it contributed to my interest that Pepa, my wife, was writing a book about a poetess, Milagros Jordá Puigmoltó, a representative character of the Alcoyan bourgeoisie, but who through her charades, collected in her only book of poems, demonstrated without no doubt, his sympathy and link to the Carlist cause.

Pepa and I visited archives and newspaper libraries in Madrid and found newspapers and documentation on the mournful days, to which Milagros Jordá dedicates one of her poems entitled "Alcoy on July 9, 1873".

Through the pages of Pepa's book, I was finding scenes and characters of great pictorial strength that attracted me to the realization of a large canvas.

If plastically the representation of the subject was scarce, -let us remember the small engravings of "The Spanish and American Illustration", clumsily made, which represent the fire of a factory, and the death of Agustín Albors, without any drama or tragedy- Literally, there was extensive documentation on the event, treated in its different aspects as a socio-political movement.

However, for me, the fundamental thing was the murder of Agustín Albors, with the subsequent dragging of his corpse down the street of San Lorenzo. A vociferous crowd and the barricades defended by the working people of the Alcoyan factories.

One day I discussed the subject with my friends Antonio Revert and Antonio Castelló. To the Both of them seemed fine with the idea and offered me whatever collaboration I needed. Several times we went out looking for streets and houses that could serve as a background for my work. Some Sundays we went into the areas of old Alcoy, with its evicted, holed and rotten houses, looking for an urban landscape for the theme of "L'arrastrà de Pelletes". Old doors, tormented gates, eroded walls, twisted and rusty balconies, bulging bars. desolation. -This was the landscape left behind by the plan to demolish the old Alcoy, promulgated by the Mayor, then in force, to replace it with some monstrous, cubic buildings that now give Alcoy an authentic papier-mâché air from Almeria sets for movies cheap-.

I started the project, and I considered the challenge without knowing what purpose it would have. The only thing that mattered to me was getting the job done.

I made several notes of those places, and I thought about how to distribute the scene of l'arrastrà del mayor.



In the first sketch, some men were pulling on the ropes attached to Agustín Albors's ankles. The scene was seen from the front. Several men in the foreground and behind, on the ground, the already inert body of the mayor. It did not convince me. They looked like some young men running in a San Fermín bull run. No. That was not what he was looking for. It had to have more tragedy, and I thought: What was more important? The character of the mayor or the vociferous characters who would contemplate the tragic scene?

In my second sketch, I saw it clearly. Two executioners would pull hard on the rope tied to the mayor's feet. How would you represent this one? Naked?. It did not seem respectful to me to paint the bloody figure of the victim. With underwear?. Even worse. It seemed more ridiculous, to show an individual of the position of the aedile, in lesser clothes. It would seem like a lover caught in adultery. At last, I found the solution. Show in the painting only the victim's legs, and to signify his position, a foot with a sock and a light to hold it. –Surely this garment was not commonly used among the people of the town–.

The tragic nature of the scene suggested to me the idea of representing it as a Greek tragedy. The two executioners would personify Sisyphus and Talion punished by Olympus for never seeing their work finished, that of introducing Augustine's body into the work. Then, among the vociferous public, would be the Fates: Atropos, the one who measures life. Clothos, the one who cuts the thread of existence. Lachesis, equity. Three screaming old women, of which Clothos will carry the scissors, hanging from his belt, as a symbol of death.

Charon, the boatman from the Styx lagoon, will also appear, waiting to transport the soul of Augustine. And among the populace, in the background, a raised fist, as a symbol of communism.

Then the "child who watches" will come. A boy in an overall and espadrilles, who pays no attention to the macabre scene, but instead fixes his eyes on us, the spectators of the play to ask us if what is happening will help. Under his arm he carries a newspaper "El Parte Diario", with a date, July 9, 1873. The newspaper is authentic and will be a *collage* on canvas.

You also had to think about the color of the work. I did not consider it appropriate to capture the tragedy with strong coloration, better to think of some somber tones and perhaps reminiscent of the daguerreotypes of the time. Monochrome color, grisaille type that shows the dramatic intention of the scene.

I continued to paint sketches. Different studies of the heads of the Fates. The "indifferent". Various drawings of the "looking boy" and a large number of notes of expressions, faces, gestures and postures, which would help me to compose the canvas of the death of Agustín Albors.

But I thought that the story was incomplete, and another work occurred to me in which I would paint a barricade, but without violence, and I conceived the scene as if a magnesium photographer had wanted to immortalize the moment. It's like the pose, the *flash* to remember. There would be characters who would be looking at the target, without blinking, without moving, to record the moment. Once the work was conceived, I began the sketches. Sketches of workers with work instruments: shovels, perpalos, harquebuses. Studies of old furniture and oil cans, the old rusty stove and various items. With all of them, I built a barricade and made two sketches. I painted an oil painting of 100 x 81 cm. And another oil painting, of the same measurements as the barricade with figures.





In the summer of 1995, in the Agres studio, I mounted the first 2 x 3 m canvas, to paint "la arrastrà". Remembering my old teachings, I put the canvas on the floor and put the frame on it, and stapled it. It was perfect, without any wrinkles or creases. And I started drawing with charcoal. Miguel Jover and Antonio Castelló served me as models for the executioners. Bare-chested and pulling on a rope tied to a cinder block to keep it taut. Then the Fates would come, and the mass of people. Everything he had worked on the sketches, he was capturing, little by little on the canvas. In October I finished the work. It was time to return to Madrid, because although I did not have school emergencies, I had to start the procedures for my retirement.

I had to wait until the following summer to continue with the second painting, "the barricade", with the same size, in the large studio where there was space for the two works. And it was completed in the fall of 1996.

I remember that that year and like every year, the mayor of Agres, Arcadio Navarro, invited us at the Fiestas, to participate in the procession of the Virgin of Agres, together with the authorities of the town and invited authorities, and afterwards to the dinner that it is usually celebrated for this reason. During dinner, it occurred to the mayor to comment that I had finished the diptych on the events in Petrolio in my study of the farmhouse, and he told me if he would mind if they went to see the works.

And there we went. There were the President of the Provincial Council of Alicante, Julio de España; Miguel Valor, Vice President; Miguel Peralta and Carmina Nacher, then councilors of the Alcoy City Council, who already knew my works, and almost twenty mayors of the towns of the region. All with their respective wives. At two in the morning, a caravan of official cars and security guard jeeps with their flashing blue lights formed on their way to the farmhouse.

There I showed them my works and explained their meaning. I don't think so many people have ever gathered in my studio.

Prior to this date, Carmina Nacher and Miguel Peralta had already taken an interest in the paintings. One day they told me that they had the idea that the City Council could acquire them at the proposal of the Popular Party, to later hold an exhibition with the diptych, the six oil sketches and the twenty-eight on paper. Said exhibition would be held in the Lonja de San Jorge and could be inaugurated on May 1. Miguel and Carmina were demonstrating their democratic spirit, since the theme of the exhibition was a left-wing social issue. That it would be set up in the aforementioned Lonja, built by a left-wing authority and that it would be inaugurated on May 1, the Labor Festival, instituted in the time of the Republic.

But the acquisition of the works had to be put to a vote in the City Council and the Popular Party did not have a majority.

Previously, a councilor from Izquierda Unida showed great interest in seeing the paintings, but since we had already returned to Madrid, one day they called me by phone to meet us in Agres. I opened the studio and there were the works awaiting trial, like the one about Paris with the apple. The councilor judged the works very positively, and even highlighted the raised fist that appears on one of the canvases. And he told us that he would vote yes when it came to the issue of the acquisition.

In October the Popular Party presented the motion, for a more than reasonable price. A motion that did not even make it to the agenda since it was withdrawn due to failure to reach consensus with the US and the PSOE.

There was no negotiation, no proposal. A No! Round, no more.

When Miguel Peralta later became Mayor, he called me and told me that the "Petrolio" exhibition was going to be held. He put me in contact with the Councilor for Culture, Trini Miró And we agreed that it would be held in the halls of the Casa de la Cultura in Alcoy.

In February 2001, Juan Pérez and his wife, Inma Ribelles, excellent restorers and friends, came to the studio to dismantle and move the two large paintings to the showroom. The entire work was framed and Antonio Castelló was in charge of the assembly and everything related to the exhibition that opened in May 2001. In the first two rooms, two splendid photographic reports from different moments of the execution of the works were exhibited, collected by Juan Antonio Castello Llorens. In two other rooms, the oil sketches, aquatints and temperas to finish in a splendid room with the two large canvases and two showcases with documentation on the events, donated by the director of the Municipal Archive, José Luis Santonja. A magnificent catalog was published that included contributions from Mayor Miguel Peralta, Antonio Castelló, Adrián Espí and Antonio Revert.

The press, radio and television covered the exhibition at length. The City Council acquired the work "L'arrastrà de Pelletes", and "La barricade" was donated by my wife and I to the town of Alcoy. These two paintings are hanging on the steps of the Alcoy Town Hall.

The acquisition of the work had its controversy and it seems opportune to reflect it in these pages, because it has a certain political air that I have wanted to stay away from. But it is true that during the almost twenty years of the socialist City Council in Alcoy, all my painting was officially ignored, perhaps because it was represented in churches.

On May 4, Antonio Revert published the following text in his regular column in the Alicante newspaper Información.

### **The facts and the rights**

The so-called "Petrolio" has been very touched by historians from both sides. And we want to state, once again, that it was not a social revolt, but a political one.

**Severino Albarracín**, a thoroughbred anarchist, attended the Congress of the First International in Córdoba in 1872, and there it was decided that he would be the one to travel to Alcoy, at that time the most manufacturing and industrial city in Spain, if we remove the Barcelona area, to put the workers from Alcoy on a war footing, who, by the way, were not as exploited as the anarchists claimed, on the contrary, they received more numerous salaries than the rest of the Spaniards, at that time. Severino Albarracín found in our city the breeding ground for his anarchist ideas, not social, let us emphasize this for understanding the paintings of **Ramón Castañer**, who in no way wanted to opt for the political.

Let us repeat Engels' phrase : "The Alcoyana revolution was a model of what should not be done in a revolution."

Perhaps because of this duality between social and political, "El Petrolio" has been buried for the artists of his time and the present. Ramón Castañer has wanted to expose, reveal and

show us with a rigorous passion for art, what this commotion in the town of Alcoy in 1873 could have been, without taking sides, as a notary of events that went down in universal history.

Throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, painters delved into history with the so-called "History paintings", that is, with mimetic prints, without soul, or tear, merely illustrative plates for the manuals to use.

Castañer, on the contrary, tries to push us into the painting, so that we are not mere spectators, but rather so that we suffer a tragic event when viewing his paintings. Let's not forget the verses of **Pablo Neruda**: "All the wars killed us all."

The painter, on this occasion, offers us two large canvases: the lynching of the mayor **Agustín Albors**, expiatory victim of a collective history, and the barricade, in one of the streets of the city, which was taken over by Severino Albarracín, in an attempt to implant "The Commune of Paris". In addition to these two large canvases, there is an infinity, a whole battery, of drawings, character studies, photographs, to situate the viewer at the "climax" of the tragedy.

This is what is given to us when we observe the great exhibition –great in number and great in the quality of the work– that we can contemplate in the Casa de la Cultura these days.

Let no one appropriate any political idea. With this event, Alcoy lost a lot in its advanced industrial progress: the workers who were doomed to disaster lost, we lost a liberal mayor, who had fought hard against the conservatives, and we lost the industrial fabric, as hundreds of employers had to go into exile from the city, fearing another revolt.

These are the facts. Each one that puts the rights.

On Wednesday, June 13, it appeared in the Ciudad de Alcoy newspaper, in its section "Tribune", a commentary signed by Joseph Albert Mestre, titled.

#### **Amb nocturnitat**

As if the conscience will not flow clearly and clearly, it is contradictory to those who are in opposition in the sense of defending the best political transparency and press posts in all reference to the increase of our artistic heritage, the government Minority of the Alcoi City Council administration is secret, it is added to the government commission without notice and the presence of other opposition groups, to the operation of the purchase of the owners Ramon Castañer's pictorial works referring to Petrolio.

Of all això em brolla a question força normal why?.

No estem davant qualsevol obra; d'això is going to order

to remember-us-ho in a feixuc way the mayor Miguel Peralta in the inauguration of the exhibition of the Center of Culture. For això hom understand that the purchase of a pictorial work of these characteristics would have to be valued by all the municipal groups.

Doncs fent abstraction from their plastic characteristics and affects all of the singularity that is the significat, this is centered on a local historical event of the XIX century with the exaggerations surpassing the fets and both contradictory readings in the historiography itself.

As far as the view that Castañer's works will go next day, it is not subtracted from the Dretana ideological interpretation of lèsmentat esdeveniment, it would have to be still força prudent, força fi per part of the municipal government. At the time of approaching the second purchase, since more to more, I talk about two murals that are intal.lats at the main scale of the Town Hall.

Però malauradament no s'ha fet així. It seems that when the law is ideologically scrupulous, it springs the reactionary vein for all things, and at any rate they do not understand forms or concepts that respond minimally to transparency and truth; It is true, on the other side, that the fact that the Petrolio is beginning to engulf the latest investigations and that, as stated in another article, remains llunyana to interpret the conflict as a good and painful film.

Consequently, why did the curated eixa pay attention to the municipal government of Alcoià in buying these pictòrique works amb nocturnitat? Could it be due to a personal commitment of the mayor to the painter, who donated his artistic qualities, no more?, I have not grown, especially after Peralta's speeches at the opening of the exhibition, and under his own secrecy in what s'ha portat the topic. On the other hand, I am reminded of Castañer's "Drag of Pelletes" to the outcry that Rafael Coloma is going to do, that Agustí Albors "had been devoured by the beast", is what the workers say, I thought that the PP alcoià, be for a Miguel Peralta stimulated by his intl.lecte and sentimental right, be for the strategy of the Spanish right that plays to threaten the numerous outrages that this has come at the beginning of the 20th century and reinvent itself history as it l'interest, they will exercise their particular "genius loci" of recreating local history. And, surely, Miguel Peralta sensed that això l'ezquerra i els progressives d'aquest poble were not going to accept it.

Però això does not justify the opasitat in which it has followed portat l'assumpte; nor the lack of transparency and debate. Això yes, the one who sees to corroborate once more is that when the dreta is released from centrism forces it is allowed to carry by the usual shipwreck of the reactionary sea that in these cases ens fa fer fins l'esgurd.

This article was answered by the Councilor for Culture, Trini Miró, in the same press on June 16, with this comment.

### **Mestre and “El Petrolío”**

It is not surprising that politicians are described on many occasions as insensitive to art, this is one of my struggles, from my point of view, first there is the person and then the politician, who do not have to be opposed. But when united person and politician dare to disqualify artistic manifestations of any kind, that is when this intolerance and disrespect occurs.

There are politicians like Mr. Mestre who, taking advantage of certain artists, champion their political position and disqualify all those proposals put forward by the municipal government of the PP. We have two clear and close examples in time with statements by Mr. Mestre towards the party poster made by Paco Barrachina of which he said: "The painting is framed in an outdated realism, from the worst times" and the paintings of Ramón Castañer about “El Petrolío”.

We would be happy if he fulfilled his political aspirations by trying to be a candidate for Mayor of Alcoy, over his partner Amando Vilaplana, whom he is trying to liquidate politically, and the truth is that we would never find a better candidate for the aspirations of the PP.

It has not been the PP that your subconscious has betrayed, Mr. Mestre, it has been yourself, because with your tantrum you have shown the unease that moves you when you see that a party of the center has been the only one capable of making that exposure and acquiring one of the paintings (the other, I remind you, was given by the author.)

It is incredible that the political left of Spain and Alcoy are defending the positions of the 19th century, with attitudes that lead to a great lack of respect towards people who speak democratically through a brush.

With these statements, Mr. Mestre demonstrates once again his political expiration, something that many of us knew and now he has made it known to the people of Alcoy.

Mr. Mestre, art must be above all political disagreements, let each artist express himself freely, this is called tolerance.

You don't want to hide your nineteenth-century political positions with your pass to the PSOE: he came from Nova Ezquerra, coming from Ezquerra Unida, into which he joined from the Communist Party. Where does Mr. Mestre come from? What are you going for, Mr. Mestre? He knows?. It simply pretends

survive politically even at the cost of its principles.  
Although, it is also true that rectifying is wise.  
We await your last rectification, since your doubts, your integration into the PSOE, in view of your vitae, is the penultimate.  
Clarify your ideas and speak from conviction, not under the shadow of artists and historical facts. History is part of the past and should help us walk towards the future.

The interpretation of the paintings on the "petrolio" is free, as free was the author's interpretation, at the time of making them.

Today we Alcoyans can be proud to have some paintings in the Town Hall, which represent historical events of great social significance.

On Saturday, June 23, Antonio Castelló Candela, a great friend who had attended the pictorial process of the two works, who was one of the models I used in the "Arrastrà" and who had been curator of the exhibition, answered in "City" and in the "Tribuna" section in these terms, to Mr. Mestre:

#### **Mestre and Castañer**

A few days ago my friend Joseph Albert Mestre published in this same newspaper a "Tibuna" entitled "Amb nocturnitat" in which he attacked the municipal government of the Popular Party, democratically elected, both by a majority of popular votes in its day and by the transfer and a new majority created after it.

Mr. Mestre, from his status as a professional politician, not from his doctorate in Art History, has every right to pronounce his opinion regarding the methods followed by those who have all the legitimacy to acquire and, furthermore, without violating the legality, the two works by the painter Ramón Castañer from Alcoy, and therefore increase the municipal artistic heritage. Well, the truth is that it is only about one, the other has been given very willingly by the painter to the town of Alcoy. But, of course, you, my friend Mestre, in your condition of I don't know what, have not been asked for permission, have not been asked for your opinion, neither as a professional politician, nor as a doctor. Or if?.

Personally, I don't care too much that Mr. Mestre messes with the right and throws all the epithets he wants, there he with his conscience, he also throws all kinds of adjectives at the Communist Party since it was discovered that thing about the Gulag and I don't care too much either. An Italian would say "manca finesse" on both sides, but what does matter to me is that he accuses the author of the works, Ramón Castañer, of not being able to escape a right-wing interpretation of the aforementioned event -

(...) *Castañer's works, com ja van dir l'altre dia, are not exempt from the Dretana interpretation of l'esmetat esdeveniment-*, or are you the one who cannot escape this right-wing interpretation using the subjectivity inherent in any pictorial work? It is not clear in his text who is not subtracted, if the author or the municipal government, and the truth is that I would like to know.

In line with this whole question, I have remembered that you, whom I myself accompanied, were one of the half dozen people who first had the opportunity to contemplate the two paintings. In Agres, do you remember? I do remember perfectly that I expected the criteria both as a professional in the teaching of fine arts and as a qualified member of the political option that you defended at that time.

After pointing out the pictorial virtues of the work, he pointed out a detail of l'Arrastrà de Pelletes, the raised fist brandished by the invisible individual in the background on the left as you look at it.

—Very well, it is like a premonition of the proletarian revolutions of the beginning of the 20th century. Proletarian solidarity could not be better represented – you said.

As for the barricade, let me tell you that if there is any nuance to be attributed to it, it is precisely the opposite of what you are insinuating. Stop for a few moments in front of the painting, of course, if you want. With this freedom we must be prudent. You see, not the horde or the populace, as Coloma unfortunately calls the people, -the thing about the "beast", honestly, I don't know where you get it from- but some workers from Alcoya, men and women, without grimace, without deceitful grimaces, hopeless, as if facing what is tragically necessary. And for this they wield –

He also said it the other day – work tools, survival tools, perpalos, files... death and life for the people of Alcoy. Ramón Castañer strays far enough from the historical exaggeration mentioned by you and is perfectly correct in his description of the facts.

Unfortunately, fatally, and this is irreversible, Mayor Albors lost his life along with a dozen more Alcoyans; It doesn't matter how many dead each side put.

If any detail of the paintings bothers you, what is it? The pointed corpse of Mayor Albors? say it. I do not think, friend Mestre, that you are in favor of those methods that were used to erase Bukharin's photographic and historical memory. The truth is that if it were so I would be disappointed. A hug.

But the controversy did not end with this, on June 28, in the same newspaper, Adrián Espí Valdés, –Academic C of the Royal Fine Arts of San Carlos in Valencia, San Fernando in Madrid, and Sant Jordi in Barcelona. Member of the

Valencian (AVCA), Spanish (AECA) and international (AICA) Associations of Art Critics. Professor of the University of Alicante–, published the following:

**Open letter to Ramón Castañer**

Ramón, friend Ramón, teacher Ramón Castañer Segura: Today, on this occasion –and perhaps on many others, or perhaps on all of them–, that well-known aphorism that says: “They bark, then we ride” is not valid at all for me. The thieves are presa dogs even though they disguise themselves as “little red hood” -and the “red”, tone or color is not said or written with any intention-, dogs with concentrated rage and you have to be safe from those incisors and his molars, poisoned and corrosive, deadly in the end.

That is why they attack and bark and bite and destroy any initiative that has not been “invented” and “given” by themselves or by their rehala or pack. Taken to other fields perhaps better known, for their political options that they blindly defend by keeping perks, salaries, allowances, seats, being capable of anything, even betraying ideologies by betraying themselves, and at the same time.

FRIEND RAMÓN: their supine ignorance makes them utter shrieks –not screams–, and on this occasion, take your work as an excuse and as a resource, with the City Council that has acquired one of the canvases and has received, at the same time, the other which you have generously donated.

They are the ones who “get in” against the party poster, against the cultural activity that is now being generated, more participatory of course; against whatever, and always using the same outdated and sterile arguments, when in reality they have had more than twenty years –almost a quarter of a century– to dictate their programs and impose their criteria. You will notice, Ramón, that I have said –and here there is an intention– “dictate”.

AND THEY TALK and talk, and bark and bark. But not because we walk, but because by barking all their existence they already have it as an atavistic custom and as a habit, they could not do without it.

Me... no case, I'm past these negative, sterile postures to say the least. Very good for your work, honest as always, for that lesson in art and aesthetics and, at the same time, for that interpretation of history from which we cannot get away in any way. A story that, no matter how sad it is, no matter how bitter it is considered – and it is sad and bitter – is nothing but a living and transcendental history for the future of our people.

IF ALBARRACÍN has a street in our city, it is worth seriously asking why the tragic events that ended the lives of some Alcoyans and that of the mayor



of those days the liberal Agustín Albors Blanes, could not have his plastic translation, in this diptych of "El Petrolio"?

Pure myopia and short-sightedness – which amounts to the same thing, envy and despair because, among other reasons, perhaps they, the ones who barked, were not capable of being fair and vindictive, impartial and impartial to more than objectives.

Let them bark, yes, let them bark!

I stayed away from this controversy, which was political and not artistic in nature, and not with indifference but with perplexity, since Mr. Mestre knew the works and when he saw them in my studio he expressed his satisfaction with the intentionality of the subject and how it had been resolved, and at no time did he address “the Dretana ideological interpretation of lèsmentat endeveniment” that he launched in his article.

If when I thought of painting the events of "Petrolio" I had resorted to the poem by Milagro Jordá and its verses that say: *Innocent victims, how terrified, / You asked for mercy with a mournful accent, / Your pleas were rejected / And death advanced by step slow; /* Yes, he would have resorted to a version skewed to the right of the events of 1873.

In my second work, the social feeling of the people is represented. There is a group of workers from Alcoy defending a barricade, which I would have turned into a pamphlet if I had changed the arquebus that one of them holds in his hands for a large hammer, and the shovel of another for a sickle. And we would have in my work the symbols of the party to which Mr. Mestre belonged for so long.

In 1994, the exhibition “María en el Grabado” was organized in Ibi, curated by Antonio Castelló. With enough time, they commissioned the advertising poster.

On a 100 x 110 cm foam board, I painted the Virgen de los Desamparados, patron saint of Ibi. On the head the royal crown and the nimbic, brown face, a little smiling and humble look. The Infante in his arms with a cross and rosary and fused with the costume of the Virgin a transparency with the urban landscape of Ibi: the church of the Transfiguration, the pump square, "Les Eres" street, the houses of the town merging into a sunny, warm, friendly and determined landscape. The harmonic color and the intention of the theme, was to unite the Virgin with the landscape, forming a symbiosis of the town with its Patroness. The procedure used was acrylic paint.

This work was the first of a series of works that linked Pepa and me to the town of Ibi. And I say us, because Pepa in 1997 was a maintainer in the act of the exaltation of the Moors and Christians festivities. Pepa said that night that "to know a town you have to know its people", and through Ibi's friends we got to know its streets, its corners and its typical places. Thus beginning a stage of friendship and union with the people of Ibi, with a continued collaboration in the Fiestas magazine, with literary works by Pepa, and gouache illustrations by me, for articles by various authors.

In 1999 I held an exhibition of Ibense themes at the Hermitage of San Vicente. There were the “vell llavador”, “la plaça del riu de les caixes”, “el carrer les eres”..., up to a total of 25 works. A personal vision of that friendly city.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Mayor Vicente García, the President of the Festival Commission Gonzalo Cortés and the Captains, Moro y Cristiano.

Every year we meet with our friends Margarita González and José Luis Vicedo and with Pilar Gómez, to celebrate our friendship. Precisely for José Luis Vicedo, I painted the comparsas of Ibi. Seven Moors and seven Christians, an iconographic representation of the costumes of the festive people.

In 2003, the Fiestas Commission with its President, my friend Enrique Montesinos, organized an exhibition with all the works that I had made for the Fiestas magazine for ten years and to show, in addition, the fourteen comparsas. Enrique sought the collaboration of Antonio Castelló, remembering the good curatorship he had in 1994. Antonio accepted and began to manage everything related to the exhibition. My collaboration in the Fiestas magazine, had produced 16 works of different sizes, plus the 14 comparsas, made a total of 30 works. To advertise the exhibition they asked me for a poster and I painted a work with various portraits of some captains from various eras and as a background the festive castle of Ibi in an act of festive exaltation.

Enrique Montesinos, as proof, made the exhibition program on his computer. Antonio went up to Agres several times to photograph the poster and me painting it. He also made several trips to Alicante to check the reproduction of the photolithos, and they thought that the advertising poster could serve as the cover of the exhibition catalogue. Antonio took care to look for the type of lettering and the distribution of the graphics. He asked me for the sketches of the comparsas, which I kept in a folder with the various notes, studies and development of his compositions so that they would appear in print on the endpapers. And in the end a magnificent program in full color was published. The exhibition was organized by the Ibi Moors and Christians Festival Commission and sponsored by the Hon. City hall.

The program opens with an article by Nicolás Martínez Ruiz, Councilor for Culture, Festes i Tradicions of the City Council. The article from the Fiestas Commission continues, and ends with that of Antonio Castelló. Then the thirty reproductions, and some texts at the bottom of the respective comparsas, which were written by the Official Chronicler of the Festival Commission, José M<sup>a</sup> Ramírez Mellado.

From Agres I was amazed at the miracle.

The exhibition opened on September 1 in the Sala de la Llotja, in the Municipal Archives building. Invitations were distributed, advertising posters and a five meter long poster was hung in the street, covering the section from the Archive building to the Fiestas Commission, announcing the exhibition.

The inauguration ceremony was opened by the Mayor of Ibi, Mayte Parra, who with heartfelt and warm words glossed the link between my painting and the Fiesta, and the people of Ibi. Then Nicolás Martínez took the floor and Antonio Castelló continued, who explained to the public the how and why of the exhibition. Finally, I thanked those who had intervened and the audience, and explained the meaning of the works, their intention and their completion in chronological order.

All of Ibi was there, the press, radio and television. Friends of Alcoy and Ibi. But they still had another surprise in store for me, which I was unaware of. On September 6, the act of the Festive Exaltation was held at eleven o'clock at night in the Salesianos theater, where the positions of Captains Moro and Cristiano, and of the Standard Bearers of each comparsa, were presented. After the maintainer's speech, the presenters of the act announced my exhibition of festive painting and said that the Festival Commission met in extraordinary session and they had unanimously awarded me the silver badge of the Commission. Therefore, they demanded my presence on stage to deliver it to me. I was stunned.

Then I realized that my family and friends knew about it and they reserved the surprise for me.

Enrique Montesinos, president of the Commission, came out to receive me, gave me the badge and handed me, amid the applause of the public and my emotion, a framed parchment announcing the granting of it.



## CHAPTER XV

*These pines that rise from the bottom of the valley  
have resisted the wind, the rain, and the frost.*

*huang ting tsien*

*The journey of journeys. Venice and its songs.  
The gondolier, up the moon with his oars.  
San Marcos and its domes of a soft and old gold.  
Venice like this, with you, it was a love of loves.*

*A. Baeza Flores*





Agres "Almazara" 1980; 2 x 1.40m

Every year we looked forward to the summers with anxiety. That disconnection from everything that linked us to Madrid, to its hustle and bustle, to its distances, to the asphalt, to the noise of cars, to that of buses, to the polluted air torn by countless sirens: ambulances, police officers, firefighters. , of pneumatic machines that excavate the soil of Madrid. The musician Edgar Varèse, has a work, "Amériques", a symphonic poem that narrates all the hubbub that existed in New York City for the thirties. Madrid had become a city with those characteristics. That is why we made our summer getaways to the Agres farmhouse, to find an almost sculpted peace, the peace that can be felt, with the purest air that gently harmonized the swaying of thousands of pine trees. There we could feel, as the poet said, "the dripping of God." And at night the calm and darkness was such that many times they prevented sleep.

Agres is a mountain town, nestled in the Sierra Mariola, of simple people, a town with an essentially agricultural economy with dry farming, a small town –between 600 and 700 inhabitants– with its bakery, a vegetable stand, a small grocery store, a butcher shop and a hairdresser's. There everyone knows each other. When the church bells ring for death, the whole town knows who has died. Two days a week there is a market in the square, gardeners offering their fruits and vegetables, the grocery truck, clothing stalls, and typical products. There is a place for women to chat, gossip, events and so on, they go from mouth to mouth. They call all contagious diseases "passage". If in the summer there is diarrhea in the town, that is "passia". If there is flu in winter, that is "pasia". Since that is Sierra de Mariola, there are hundreds of medicinal plants that the townspeople know about. Sage for the gut, chamomile for the stomach, thyme with honey for colds, rosemary, lime blossom... and so on forever. With a mixture of herbs, sweet anise and dry anise they make a liqueur, the "herbero", which is

drink with breakfast coffee or accompanied by some figs and that pushes like a bull.

In September there are the big festivals of the town. Its patron saint is the Virgin of Agres, who has been venerated since 1484, when tradition tells of her appearance to a one-armed shepherd. In the masses of the convent the "Joys to the Virgin" are sung, and in them it is narrated how the Virgin, -a Romanesque carving that was venerated in the parish church of Alicante-, left through a window when a fire threatened to destroy her. They tell and sing how some sailors saw her cross the firmament haloed with very clear light. And how she went to sit on the trunk of a lidonero in Agres, to talk with Pastor Gaspar and tell him to go down to town and announce to the neighbors that she was there, to be help and comfort. And so that everyone would believe him, he returned the arm that the pastor was missing.

All this had been represented, perhaps since the forties, in a simple Little play in the town square.

At the end of the seventies, Paquita Beneyto, a teacher, in love with her people and their traditions, wrote a text that, joining the simple and modest narration of the people, recounted through the work the event that occurred. All the actors were from Agres, and it was performed for the first time in the "l'Assut" square.

I really don't know how we got involved in the performance. But I think it was in 1981, they asked Pepa to direct the play and I began to think about the stage and the musical background.

That with the illusion of all was taking shape. Pepa taught them to qualify, to vocalize, to lose their fear, to take security on the scene. Things typical of the town were introduced into the work: the participation of children recalling the "farolet festival", so deeply rooted in the popular. In it, the children form a playful procession with their lanterns built with hollowed-out melons and watermelons and then a chiseled drawing on the outer crust, so that the candle lit inside highlights the transparencies. The children entered through the central aisle of the public singing a melodic children's singsong. "the night watchman s'ha perdut en la font de l'Assut...", to end in a large circle, amidst laughter and joy on stage.

Another introduction were the typical dances of the town. The "fandango de Agres", accompanied by the music of the "tabaleter" and the "dolçainer".

The character of the night watchman was also included, with his cane, keys and flashlight, calling out the time and the weather.

I was in charge of making the decoration. With articulated wooden panels, several houses in the town were built under my direction: the house where Gaspar lived with his mother, the house of Carmeta and Pere, the house of Teresa's family; the oven, the bell tower. I painted everything imitating the old and deteriorated walls and walls.

I put reed blinds on the doors, windows with rusty bars where the sad lights of the lamps appeared. The day before the performance, the stagehands, all the people of the town, were in charge of setting up the shed on a splendid natural setting such as that of l'Assut.

I was in charge of the musical assembly. With music by Richard Strauss, the beginning of "Así habla Zaratustra", two voices began the presentation of the work and the cast of characters, with the names of all those who had collaborated.

I racked my brains looking for the music that could be coupled to the different passages, either to reinforce a situation, or qualify a moment of tenderness, or fill a transitional silence, or glorify the moment of the apparition of the Virgin on the mountain between lights. and incense. Debussy, Mahler, Respighi,



Shostakovich, to end with the tremendous finale of "Pictures from an exhibition".  
Mussorgsky's "The Great Gate of Kyiv" amid the greetings and applause of the audience.

We had no subsidy and few technical resources, but we supplied everything with imagination and the enthusiasm and participation of all.

In 1984, the 5th Centenary of the Apparition of the Virgin was celebrated. The town was decked out as we had never seen it. The streets competed in decorations, on the balconies bedspreads and plants and the floor carpeted with lavender, thyme and chamomile, the air was impregnated with the Sierra Mariola. For that year the text of the work had been translated into Valencian. Logically, the author was in charge of the translation and during the rehearsals Pepa thought of combining two popular songs that we recorded, with the voice of Manuel Bodí. One of them, for the time of the threshing and the other as a separation of two stage scenes. And she herself recorded a stanza from a poem by Carles Salvador and a few stanzas from a poem by the author, to reinforce the action and intention of some moments. Over time, the work gained strength and was established as a sacramental play that is represented every year on the last Saturday of August.



*The Shepherd. Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Castle of Agres – 2001; 2.50 x 1.50m*

that we would be very excited, but not to force the situation, -it is well known that in small towns things are sometimes not easy.

They were more than twelve years of rehearsals and works. The younger ones were growing up and they no longer fit the roles and a substitute had to be found for them. And some people who played important roles had to stop, either for health reasons, tiredness or age.

The play had us mortgaged during the summers and in the end we thought that what we had created together was something for the people, with actors from Agres. It was fair that the people of the town were in charge of continuing, maintaining and conserving that work that symbolizes the spirit of the event that occurred in 1484.

Now we have the satisfaction of attending as spectators, knowing that the direction is in the professionalism of Enrique Francés, and the enthusiasm of all those who participate.

It had been some time since the mayor of Agres had the idea of declaring Pepa and me adoptive children. He had mentioned it to us many times, and we always answered

He always told us the same thing: "You have done a lot for the town, and Agres wants to thank you."

And indeed, by agreement of the Plenary of the City Council, and with the consent of all civic and cultural entities, on June 30, 2001, at 8:00 p.m. and at the Mariola Cultural Center, the act of appointment was held.

All the political parties of Agres were represented on the stage, and the hall was completely packed.

The act was simple, friendly and very endearing. The Mayor read the municipal agreement of June 4 whereby, after the file began in October 2000, Josefa Botella Seguí and Ramón Castañer y Segura were named adoptive children of the Villa de Agres. The Mayor, Arcadio Navarro, spoke of our merits, and we took the floor to thank the distinction and narrate our experiences, our affection for the people and our love for the people. And as a climax and surprise, the Association of Housewives had prepared a little farce and several dances. -Because I have to say, that when Pepa left the direction of the "Appearance of the Virgin", she committed herself to the Housewives, to rehearse for them each year, a farce that they represent during the cultural week of the Agres festivities-. The applause was continuous and we were very excited.

At the end of the evening, we celebrated the event with a tasty dinner at the restaurant "El Convent" in Agres.

That same year, during the summer months, in our corner of the farmhouse, I carried out the commitment acquired with the "Filà dels Pastorets de la Mare de Déu d'Agres" to paint a painting that represented the shepherd Gaspar Tomás, the shepherd to the that the Virgin appeared to him.

In a room of the convent, two large paintings were stored. One represented S. Antonio and was signed by Carmen Tomás, the work is deficient in concept and execution. The other is "The death of S. José", by the painter from Agres, Remigio Soler. The two paintings measured approximately the same, I think I remember, 2.50 x 1.50 m. They were quite damaged and had to be restored, and since the intention was to recover them so they could be hung in the convent church, I thought that the pastor's painting would have the same measurements.

The shepherd that I painted is standing, in the filà costume: white shirt, black vest, black sash, ocher-colored embroidered breeches, embroidered leggings of the same color, and esparto espadrilles. In the hand the staff and a rosary, and a view of the town of Agres losing itself through its valley, with an abrupt and stony landscape, which in smooth transparency blends with the body of the shepherd. I do not want to sanctify the pastor, I want to symbolize in his figure the religious fervor of Agres and the link between the pastor and the message of the Virgin: "This is my beloved people."

When some pastors from the board of directors saw the finished work, they were frankly moved. I restored the other two works, the three were framed, and in a religious act the paintings were hung in the Sanctuary on September 1, the "Vinguda" festival in Agres. That same day we were named "Honorary Shepherds" and we were given the two-meter-high staff, which as a medieval knight's lance accredits and distinguishes us with such an honorary appointment.

On September 8, the feast of the Virgin, after the solemn campaign mass at the foot of the monastery, the signing of the document that regulates the donation that D. Ramón Castañer y Segura makes of the painting to the town of Agres took place. AND

The document is signed by the President of the "Filà dels Pastorets", the Mayor of Agres", the chaplain of the Sanctuary and myself.

Every year on September 7 and in the solemn procession that the town offers to its Patron Saint, we parade full of emotion and pride with the shepherds who, like royal halberdiers, venerate and guard the Virgin of Agres.

The last days of that summer, close to our departure to Madrid, we went to the town church, the parish church of S. Miguel, because they planned to fix up the sacristy and prepare an area of the upper building to house a small museum.

Inspecting the area, we found a carving of a Madonna with Child inside a cupboard, which immediately caught our attention. The closet oozed moisture on the ceiling and walls and logically everything in it was deteriorated and dirty.



*Agres Caseta de Don Facundo 2006, 100 x 81 cm*

We made the visit, Pepa and I with the priest D. Francisco Ferrer; with Chelo Navarro, enthusiastic about everything that concerns his people; Conchita Reig, always efficient and willing to collaborate and lend her help, and Carmen Pons, at that time, Councilor for Culture in Agres.

We didn't know which Virgin it represented, but it was certainly a beautiful carving, perhaps from the mid-19th century. He was approximately 1.30 m tall. Both

The clothes, the cape and the dalmatic, like the various petticoats and skirts with which the two images appeared dressed, showed deterioration and rust spots and the wigs were disgusting to touch. And

we promised to fix them in our next summer. It was like leaving something pending, thinking about our return a year later.

We had a pending trip. I had always been attracted to Venice, but for various reasons, we had never done it. In the summer of 2001 we decided. But a tremendous event endangered our project. I mean the attack on the Twin Towers in New York. The entire world watched in horror at the destruction of the two buildings and made us doubt our journey. But we finally did it.

I don't like traveling by plane. When out of necessity I have had to use it, I am tense, I do not enjoy the trip and when I arrive at the destination I would like to kiss the earth. So I asked a tourist agency to prepare a comfortable trip by train to Venice.

We left, Madrid-Barcelona in the Talgo. Later, Barcelona-Milan, in the "Tren Hotel", independent in our compartment, and being able to sleep in our bunk beds. Finally, on the Intercity, from Milan to the Santa Lucia station in Venice.

They had reserved a small hotel for us, coquettish and very Venetian, "El Violino d'Oro".

Venice is something else. Is something special. It doesn't look like any city. The lack of road circulation, since there are no cars, no buses, not even simple bicycles, nullifies noise pollution. But the calm is disturbed by the murmur of the hundreds of tourists that invade its streets. Their footsteps, their laughter, languages, and their automated, robotic faces, eager for legends and stories, which the guides recount with monotonous chants by dint of repetitiveness.

The Venetian streets lend themselves to the memory of Renaissance or romantic stories, so often seen in films about "Romeo and Juliet", or the famous "Death in Venice" by Luchino Visconti, based on the work of Thomas Mann and music by Mahler. Its wide and majestic channels, or narrow and mysterious ones, reflect in their murky waters old buildings, festooned with patches of thallophytic moss at water level, and adorned in their capricious and undulating flashes, with amber and multicolored iridescences of oil, which some frisky engine had let out.

The gondolas, the famous boats, long, stylized, in black patent leather, upholstered with fabrics of lurid tones, with gilded bronze decorations, give them the funereal mystery of mortuary carriages. The screaming, singing and shameless gondoliers contemplate the very commercial picture of Venice of engravings, watercolors or gouaches that are sold by the hundreds in the stalls of street painters.

Venice is kind to kick. Its streets, typical and special, invite you to breathe a peaceful atmosphere. Perhaps too many tourists, but apart from these, it is harmonious and calm. The center is small. Without getting too tired you can visit several places. As transportation there are "vaporettos", motor barges, like sea buses, with the "biglietto di bordo" that for a small price can take you anywhere on the canals.

Our first outing, newcomers, was to the grandiose St. Mark's Square, impressive in its size and beautiful layout. We also went to contemplate

from the "Fondamenta" of San Zacarías, the calm of the Grand Canal, with San Giorgio and the Salute diluted by the distance.

The next day we visited the church of Nuestra Señora de la Salute, which began in 1631, its construction lasted 46 years. It has a basilica plan with a huge central dome. Portico with columns and cornices and galleries full of sculptures of saints, prophets and angels. A large bronze sculpture of the owner crowns the center of the proportionate dome.

A small museum installed in the sacristy, shows paintings and works by various Italian artists. A painting by Tintoretto "The Wedding at Cana" painted in his youth and in which the Venetian spirit of the time is represented stands out. The work is a display of stage design. A large room with a coffered ceiling made up of beams and frameworks. The central lamp has multiple arms. The ceiling is decorated with nine panels from which pendulous ribbons hang, trying to represent the fresh air that would flow through the room. The banquet table placed in perspective from the front. The women to the right of the table and the men to the left. Jesus occupies the head of the background, as if presiding over the act, and some large windows with arches in which the clouds, in the twilight afternoon, close the last term of the motley complex.

The Plaza de San Marcos was the place of passage to our hotel, in it there were three important buildings to visit. The Byzantine-style Basilica, which began to be built in the 9th century and was remodeled in the 11th century. The interior is grandiose and harmoniously distributed, but its magnificence, the exuberance of the Byzantine gilding, the scheduled tourist visits, and the queues to admire the extremely famous Pala d'Oro, a kind of enormous *reliquary* of purest gold and a great profusion of settings in precious stones, make you think of the exacerbated exhibitionism of one of the great useless treasures of the Church.

Then the ascent to the *Campanile*, a building isolated from the Basilica and of later construction, from where we could admire an aerial view of the square. The five great domes of San Marco, the buildings of the *Doge's Palace*, the *Old Library*, the work of Sansovino, the *fondamenta de San Zacarías* and the hundreds of doves that dot the pavement of the square, where like two bastions of Venetian royalty emerge the two columns, that of the *winged lion of San Marcos* and that of *San Jorge*.

Another day we headed towards the Accademia Museum. Splendid building that houses a large collection of artistic works. I am not going to describe anything about the well-assembled museum, I only mention two works that greatly impressed me:

One of them, *The Miracle of San Marcos*, by Jacobo Robusti, nicknamed *El Tintoretto*, is unbeatable. A large canvas, characterized by the dynamism that its author masterfully mastered, like the movement of the human masses, without falling into theatricality. Superb in the qualities of the clothing and dazzling in the representation of the shine of the metals that stands out from the crowd of characters, well composed and ordered. Master in foreshortenings, as well as chiaroscuro.

The other work, *The Supper of Jesus at the House of Levi*, by Paolo Caliari, who was born in Verona in 1528, was called El Veronese. This artist painted four large canvases, let's say, of a table and a tablecloth: *The wedding at Cana* (Louvre), *The meal at Simon's house* (Louvre), *The meal at the leper's house* and *The Supper of Jesus at Levi's house* that we were seeing in the museum of the Academy.

The painting represents a monumental setting of columns and arches, and the figure of Christ with his apostles in an opulent feast, in the house of the Pharisee.

Impressive drawing and masterful composition. He is representing within a warm and harmonious color, the various characters that appear in an implausible way in the work. It has a tremendously Venetian flavor. There are colored servants, slaves, jesters, and exotic birds. Some apostles clean their teeth with toothpicks, while others vomit the excessive food they have devoured at the party. This bacchanal scandalized the Court of the Holy Office, which arrested Veronese, severely punished him and forced him to modify and correct so much excess. Something that Veronese did not do, thanks to which, today we can contemplate such a monumental work.

A must visit to the island of S. Giorgio Maggiore, which always serves as a background to the typical Venetian landscape. It was noon when we visited the church and it coincided with 12 o'clock when we were in the "campanile", we had to cover our ears because the carillon sounded loud.

Like good Alcoyans, from above, we salute the bronze statue of S. Jorge who culminates the dome, and from there we admire the impressive view of Venice.

One day we dedicated ourselves to exploring the fascinating neighborhood of "la Fenice", with its narrow streets and hidden squares, where life is tangible due to the shrill conversations and the culinary smells that escaped from some windows and the hanging clothes that seemed to greet us. In those streets there are many shops selling masks, costumes and costumes for its famous carnival. And many music stores, especially baroque music by Italian composers: Rossini, Pergolesi, Bellini, Vivaldi...

We attended a concert of Venetian Baroque music at the Scuola Grande di San Teodoro, near the Rialto Bridge, in which musicians and singers were dressed in 18th-century garb.

Some afternoons, after dark, we would sit at the typical tables of the famous cafés cantantes in S. Marcos square. It was nice to rest, savor a good coffee served with exquisiteness, and listen to the soft music of the small orchestras.

We were, of course, on the Rialto bridge, which crosses the great canal joining the two rivas, La Fondamenta del Vin and Riva di Ferro. The bridge is stocked with little shops, with "souvenirs", with the most varied objects to take as souvenirs. Venetian products, Murano glass, bags imitating the big and well-known Italian brands.

We ate at a restaurant specializing in pasta, one of the many that abound on the banks of the Vin. There, the waiters announce the excellence of their kitchens, the daily menus and the exquisiteness of their wines.

We had the opportunity to visit the interesting exhibition on the "Divine Eleonora", an actress, Eleonora Dusi. The exhibition was organized by the "Fondazione Giorgio Cini", in a splendid location on the island of S. Giorgio Maggiore. The show was staged by the prestigious set designer Pier Luigi Pizzi, and the distribution and setting he had achieved was truly sensational. Stupendous photographs of her youth and her performances, paintings and portraits of the actress, splendid dresses from her performances, many of them designed by Fortuny, stage sketches and a reproduction of one of her dressing rooms with all the toiletries. Mirrors, compacts, perfumes, beads... All wrapped in soft and mysterious lighting.

We left the visit to the Doge's Palace for the last day. The series of constructions that form a true tapestry of white and pink marble. HE

They began to build by the architect Baseggio Calendar in 1309 and in 1442 they were continued by Giovanni Bonn.

The visit, according to the ticket we purchased, consisted of the route that went through the Ducal Palace, the Correr Museum, the Nazzionale Archaeological Museum and the monumental room of the Nazzionale Marciana Library.

That was great, with an extraordinary heritage. Maps, sea routes, globes, furniture, paintings, armor, ancient costumes, harnesses and weapons. On our tour I saw the sign that pointed with an arrow: *Il Ponte dei Sospiri*. We left the route and went down the dark and gloomy stairs that led to the corridor illuminated by the hatches with bars high up.

We were completely alone. Surrounded by dungeons, mute witnesses of the torments and suffering of the prisoners. We started walking through the corridors and got lost several times, because it formed a kind of labyrinth and we always came out at the same point. There was no one to ask. At last, a narrow stairway hidden behind the bend led us up to the new narrow hallway with stark walls. Suddenly, the sun played with the latticework of the windows.

We looked outside and saw the waters of the Ducal canal. We were passing through the Bridge of Sighs! We also sigh with relief!

The next day we concluded our trip to Venice.

In the summer of 2002, when we began our stay in Agres, we met in the church to resolve the issue of the image. We took it out of the closet and the women, very willing, dedicated themselves to undressing the Virgin and Child. When the clothes were removed, the body of the carving appeared below. Head, hands and feet carved and polychrome, but with the accumulated dirt of time. The arms were articulated at the elbow and shoulders and, like the body, which was only hinted at in shape, painted in a grayish sky blue. The size of the Child was like that of a wooden doll, quite well done. He was standing, arms articulated at the shoulders. On the back a wooden block, embedded to be able to introduce it under pressure into the round hole that the Virgin had in the abdomen. Naturally, the dalmatic and petticoat had the corresponding hole to hold and set the Child.

The wood used for the images appeared to be cherry and due to the constant vaporized moisture inside the cabinet, the joints of the carving had cracked at the lower extremities. The pieces that formed the clouds that served as a pedestal for the image had sunk along with the feet on the central floor, which were missing several toes.

I had committed but never done a restore. Pepa collected the clothes and wigs to try to solve their arrangement and Conchita Reig took all the petticoats to sew them, wash them and try to remove the rust stains.

One morning, the carving wrapped in cloth was taken out of the church to bring it to me at the farmhouse. Next to the church there is a bar and the people who were sitting there were stunned and later commented that a dead man had been taken out of the church and taken to the painter's house.

The first thing I did was clean it with a suitable product. That restoration took me all summer. Between my little experience and the difficulty of the various problems that arose, they kept me busy for a good part of the day.

.In their time, this carving must have been taken out in a procession, but when they realized that their feet were sinking into the clouds, they held it with huge

nails and screws that with the subsequent humidity oxidized and became a body with the wood. I bought a metal saw and I had to seek the strength of my son Ramón, to cut the bars that prevented disassembling the pieces. I numbered these and then married them one by one.

During a visit that Juan Pérez, my restaurateur friend, made home, I showed him the work and my audacity to get into that mess, but he gave me some ideas and advice that helped me solve various problems.

Little by little, that was taking shape. He joined the pieces by gluing them and reinforcing them with countersunk screws. Then he covered the holes and caulked the joints. With modeling paste I added the missing toes and after mounting all the pieces, I painted the deteriorated and chipped parts and at the end I gave them a coat of shellac.

Pepa was looking for where and how they could restore the clothes and wigs, but everything was very expensive and we did not have funds for expenses. But everything was solved. She darned, renewed her laces, and took it to the dry cleaners.

I had dedicated so much time to it in the workshop that I had set up in the farmhouse, that my grandson, who was three years old, when someone asked for me, would say: "My iaio is with the Virgin."

And one day, in mid-September, we again moved the carving to the church and we gather to coat the images.

Conchita brought the petticoats, she had worked a lot, they didn't look like the same ones she took with her, they were white, starched, and with some new lace. It was a joy to see the result of so much work. Petticoat, dalmatic, cloak, clean wigs, the Child enshrined in the Virgin and shining crowns. Everything was finished.

The image was exhibited in the town church, and a series of photographs were hung in the atrium, as a report of the various moments of its restoration.

Now it remains in the sacristy waiting for that small museum that allows its exhibition, along with other liturgical objects of historical value.

When we arrived in Madrid, after the summer, our life was almost always the same, but never boring. Since my retirement, and above all, since our son's wedding and his move to Paris, Pepa and I were left alone and I had time to join some things in the house. I like to do the shopping, and our dinners, always frugal, are prepared by me, and I think I am an expert in salads.

On Sunday mornings we always go to the concerts of the National Orchestra in the Auditorium. We go out for the pleasure of walking, going to the movies or the theater. We go to those exhibitions that seem interesting to us, to poetic acts to which Pepa is linked by friendship with the poet or because she is interested in his poetry.

I have time to paint while I listen to Radio Clásica. We look forward to the Christmas and Easter holidays with joy, and not because I'm worried about classes now, but because of the arrival of our children and grandson.

I have always been and am very independent, loneliness does not overwhelm me when the two of us are together. Perhaps in Madrid, what we have not found or fostered is the group of friends. Friendships, many, for a dinner or a meeting. But the trust and confidence of an intimate chat, I don't have that in Madrid.

Friendship is one of the causes that bind me to Alcoy, and that I also found in Valencia.

Madrid was at first work, now it is independence and all the possibilities of cultural enrichment within the reach of personal concern.



The bad thing is that when you have time, and you are free from some worries, it limits you and makes your health impossible. A can!

We cannot make some trips, as I would like, and I am not referring to long trips, but to take the car and drive without haste, deviating from the route because a bell tower has caught your eye, or to taste a meal, or to visit a hermitage.

Now, we move to Elche to see, above all, the grandson. We are going to Alcoy, because our roots are there, our forever friends and what remains of the family. And every year we return to Agres, because our second home is there, for a reason we are their adopted children.

And I don't know how we manage, but every summer we have something to do in Agres.

A few years ago, speaking with the priest and a group of friends, we discussed the problem that arose on September 7. As I have already said, that day is the town's biggest festival. On the night of the 6th to the 7th, the "Filà dels Pastorets", at five in the morning they go up to the convent accompanied by many devotees, they take down the image of the Virgin from her dressing room and move it to a nearby square, in the middle of Sierra Mariola, and they place it on a makeshift altar. At six o'clock a mass is celebrated in memory of their deceased and at the end, a shepherd, the ambassador, descends towards the town announcing in his embassy the encounter with the Virgin: Rejoice compatriots / of the news that I bring you . / *Come with me to the square / and there will be my story.*

Already in the square, he recounts the event that occurred in a romance: (...) *He looked at me, and I, the I looked / he called me, and I went to his side / and his pilgrim face / left me excited.*

*She is so beautiful and so pure / that my heart has been stolen! / and when you go up to see her / something else will happen to you.*

*In a very clear voice he told me: / Agres is my beloved town / and I take it for dwelling / in preference to another side. (...)*

*I told him: I am rude / they will not believe your discovery / unless you give me proof / of what you are talking about.*

*And then, Mother and Son, / they put this arm on me; / being as you know / for many years one-armed. (...)*

And the recital ends by inviting the authorities, the clergy and the neighborhood to go up to the convent, to meet the Virgin. Once there and in procession, the image is lowered and deposited in the town church, where it remains all day seven and part of day eight.

And here the problem arises. There is a lot of devotion to this Virgin throughout the region. From far away places people go to deposit a bouquet of flowers and some prayers, precisely that day and they find the niche empty.

This has created serious trouble, as many pilgrims feel disappointed by not being able to offer their gifts and requests.

When we were discussing the fact, I thought that in many hermitages, churches and sanctuaries, when the venerated image is removed from its altar, for whatever reason, a tapestry or canvas with a painting of the image is placed to replace its absence.

And I offered to paint a canvas with the image of the Virgin and Child in her arms.

In the sanctuary, the Virgin is in a niche decorated in the Venetian Renaissance style, whose mouth is a golden plaster frame, forming a semicircular arch at the top. A thick glass covers the front. The Virgin is deposited on a pedestal with clouds and cherubs

My idea was to paint a replica of the Virgin on an arched frame, to put it behind the glass. The measurements were taken and the carpenter promised me that he would have it ready for the following summer.

And so it was, when we arrived in Agres in June 2003, I had the picture ready with the canvas mounted, to be able to paint and they brought it to the studio.

Some photos of the Virgin were taken, because I was interested in seeing the ascending diagonal from the viewer's point of view, since the dressing room is two meters high. The size of the Virgin measures, from the base of the cloud base to the small crown she wears, 1.52 m, and the alcove is 2.17 m high by 1.62 m wide.

I wanted to paint the round shape of the carving. I did not want a painting of the Virgin, but one that had such relief that it could cause the viewer the sensation of "trompe l'oeil", a kind of optical illusion with which the viewer believes they see what is not, a reality where there is only one painting.

Personally, I didn't like the Venetian decoration at the back of the dressing room. So much adornment, so much floral decoration in white, blue and gold, swallows up the Romanesque, simple and harmonious image of the Virgin. I was studying various options to change that, and in the end I thought that in order for it not to lose its decorative essence, I had to outline the background with a slight insinuation.

It was perfect! This helped to create the sensation of relief in the carving, which was what I had preconceived.

When I finished the painting, some members of the Pastors' board of directors came to the studio: The President, Juan B<sup>a</sup> Calatayud, accompanied by Miguel Tomás, Miguel Beneyto and Pedro Reig, with whom it is always pleasant to talk, and they were delighted and pleased.

Framed the work was truly spectacular. My intention when painting the painting was for it to remain in the Sanctuary of the Virgin, but according to what the priest told us, it seems that liturgically it is recommended that there be no duplication of images within the same church. Therefore, we agreed that the work would be exhibited at the premises of the "Filà".

On August 31 at 8 in the afternoon, the blessing of the work took place with the assistance of the Mayor, members of the Filà association, friends and the public who joined the event. And the act was signed, in which it is stated that, the painting of the Virgin, we donated it, Pepa and I, to the town of Agres. Remaining in the custody of the Pastors, who would be in charge of taking it up to the convent every year, so that it would remain there covering the niche, on September 6 and 7.

And when a museum is built in the convent, the painting will be transferred to it.

This same year of 2003, I confess that I myself was moved when I saw my work in the convent. We had decided to hang the painting covering the alcove of the dressing room, instead of placing the work behind glass, and the relief effect that the image had was spectacular. Many, many people, who as pilgrims went to visit the Virgin on the 7th, believed that the image had not been brought down to town. It really has an amazing effect that I am very satisfied with.

## CHAPTER XVI

*It is not lucky to be loved. Every person loves himself; instead  
love, that is luck.*

*Herman Hesse*



In a previous chapter I have commented on the noisy life of Madrid. But Madrid has other sensational things. It has an offer, a range of cultural and recreational events, as I think there are few Spanish cities that have it. National and private theatres, classical music concert halls, jazz or rock halls, different places where you can listen to a speaker or participate in a gathering and many art galleries, many of all styles, tastes and preferences.

The "boom" of the galleries in Madrid began back in the 50s. It was the Spain in which the Franco regime had dusted off the traditional symbols of Isabel and Fernando and "walked towards God" through "the empire of faith". The Spain that supported the artistic movement that abstract art brought with it. Poor Spain, then, had nothing to export, but the miracle happened, avant-garde painting destroyed international political barriers. Avant-garde painters and sculptors triumphed in the great contemporary art biennials, Sao Paulo, Alexandria, Venice, and the Spanish regime turned its entire political framework to disseminate and promote this art. Exhibition curators were created and critics were revalued in such a way that they considered themselves and acted like totemic gods. Carlos Areán, Cirílot, Gaya Nuño, González Robles, Juan Portolés, were the "poncios" who indicated which painters were suitable to nourish the biennials. And they launch Tapiés, Antonio Saura, Viola, Canogar, Feito, Cuixart, Tharrats to plastic stardom... In Madrid the First Hispanic American Biennial was prepared. Barcelona, does not want to be left behind, and founds the "Salón de los Once", selecting a group of painters of the latest trend.

All capitals seek subsidies to create their group. In Madrid, the Museum of Contemporary Art. In the Canary Islands, Eduardo Westerdahl also puts avant-garde art into museums. In 1953 in Santander the First International of Abstract Art was celebrated. In Valencia, Aguilera Cerní creates the "Grupo Parpalló". On Radio Nacional Antonio Campoy makes his critic, and in the most important newspapers, Calos Arines, Faraldo, Popovici, Venancio Sánchez Marín dictate their rules and comments...

This proliferation of abstract works had to be caged in some places, and it was thought to create museums to collect and exhibit the works. Strange thing, in an art that began reviling the painting of traditional museums as a symbol of a bourgeois and expired past and was participating in what it had rejected. Galleries that formed a kind of "ghetto" for avant-garde artists proliferated, and painters who did not meet the qualities required by them were automatically rejected. Commerce began to be intermingled with art, and it was thought of setting up a large exhibition somewhere in Madrid with the participation of national and foreign galleries, which could exhibit and sell their works freely. This is how "Arc" was created. An annual pictorial fair in which "the dernier vauge" of avant-garde art was presented. Great publicity was launched and it was officially opened. I was very excited to see the exponents of current art, but what I began to see there was disappointing and disappointing me. Works with shabby, dilapidated materials that participated more in a scrapping workshop than in a show by and for art. There reigned the desire to present works, with the "even more difficult", as if it were a circus show.

There were the "snobs" on duty, the critics, the people "understood" in the matter. All very tall, very friendly, and with very raised eyebrows, as if "being back". They greeted each other with surprised cries and hysterical giggles. They hugged and kissed. –Have you seen the works of the "Vidi, Vinci" Gallery? They are divine of death! And what about the "Mancelli" Gallery in Milan? What a pass, they are the best in the world!–

We got away with a bad grape, which lasted me a long time. But even so, we repeated the visit the following year, and I promised never to return. On 2-8-2003, a Madrid newspaper published a column written by Cecilia García, which said

*Arco returns and, with her, my bewilderment. My cultural masochism takes me on the wings. A walk through the galleries, which is the same as entering an orgy of shapes, figures and colours. There are so many works to contemplate that visitors participate in a visual marathon, which almost forces the exit to ask for replacement retinas. Here a Miró, there several Tapies, a little further away, Lucio Muñoz, in the background, on the right, a colorful canvas by an artist with an unpronounceable name and practically unknown to novices. The pilgrimage continues, you look at some works in passing, others surprise you, most are indifferent to you and, furthermore, you suspect that whoever painted them, modeled them or simply recycled objects to give them a new use has a serious psychological problem. Art, art.. Art?. Depending on how you look at it and never better said.*

*All the senses are put on alert and the human landscape that surrounds the sample is observed. You take a look at the visitors, most of them young people who, already in their way of dressing, with that trademark slovenliness, it is unknown if they are there to see or to be looked at. There is never a lack of some fool, wanting to impress his companion, who tries to explain the inexplicable with verbal circumlocutions as devoid of content as the painting they are analyzing upside down and, they regret, that it is not missing, that such a noble job as creation is kidnapped by mercantilism. And he criticizes it, that, if you look closely, you can guess the Custo label behind that cool shirt that, at least, cost him sixty euros when a "graffiti artist", on an inspired day, could have designed it for him for less than ten.*

*It is inevitable to leave Arco with the feeling that it is an ideal fair to satisfy the vanity of an immense minority of petulants with a vocation for modernity who, more than talking, decide, when it should be the works that express themselves, without the need for a simultaneous translation by the wise guy on duty*

The inability is disguised with the suit of provocation. The essential rules of the art with the most extravagant pirouette. Now, when it comes to accepting the "candy" these avant-garde artists do not even hesitate to assent to the most classic and traditional. The case of the painter Manolo Ribera, that of the metallic paintings with meshes and polygonal networks, who was offered a chair at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and sat down. The same happened with Francisco Nieva, the breaker of rules in the Spanish theater, the author of "La carroza de plomo candente", which was a stage explosion, and when he was offered a chair at the Royal Spanish Academy, he calmly accepted it. You have to have many "cataplines" to reject these perks.

In Madrid they know how to put together anthological exhibitions very well. I remember the one dedicated to José M<sup>a</sup> Sert. It was something sensational. They had reproduced the great hall of a London mansion that the Catalan painter had painted and decorated.

Also the magnificent exhibitions that the Prado continuously offers: Velázquez, Goya, Valdés Leal, Vermeer...

Mapfre, the insurance company, has a splendid exhibition hall, where we have seen true pictorial samples, in which bringing together such a quantity of works is already a true display of work and magnificence. There we saw the anthology of Sorolla, or that of Ramón Casas, Santiago Rusiñol, Romero de Torres... These complete exhibitions, where they show you a series of sketches, studies and sketches that follow the artist's formative line, serve to support the idea evaluative, positive or negative, about this or that artist. I'll explain. I had my doubts about how any artist had reached high levels in his pictorial reputation, when in reality, they were no more than second-rate painters.

For me, Darío de Regoyos, was a painter who had a catalog in the artistic world that did not correspond to him. It is true that I only knew his work in reproductions. When we went to see his anthology I confirmed my doubts about his art. He seemed to me a mediocre painter, with some successful work and others frankly deficient.

The same thing happened to me with Anglada Camarasa. I knew of some work seen in collective exhibitions, but not a compilation of his paintings, among which there were many rejectable ones.

The same thing happened to me at the Tapies exhibition. He had works from his abstract period of great size and with special textures, where the creative genius of the painter was seen, but in the room dedicated to his most recent work, that was not swallowed by even the most benevolent adept: A piece of furniture, a wardrobe moon with the door open, with clothes, shirts, suits, coats that, forming a cascade, fell to the outside. Or, several stacks of white china plates that made up another work. And a desk with open drawers, from which came a kind of horsehair that was spreading and covering part of the table and the floor. It was another work of art. Please, a little seriousness! This is not acceptable in art. But it was Tapies.

In 1993, a great exhibition on "Art Nouveau" was held, entitled "Vienna 1900", in which the entire content of this fleeting movement was exposed: Art in Vienna – its geometric, functional, erotic, expressive aspect. Its history starting from the time of Franz Joseph I, until the proclamation of the First Austrian Republic, in 1918. Its music (Mahler, Richard Strauss, Schönberg, Webern), its literature and architecture (O. Wagner, Olbrich, Hoffman, Loos.)

Within the large number of painters who represent this movement, I am only going to highlight Gustav Klimt, for his expressiveness, originality and veracity. He began with a very personal symbolist stage and in 1900 he made "Pallas Athena", "Judit" and the famous "Frieze from Beethoven's tomb". Afterwards it becomes more subjective and it is like a personal response about the human cycle: Being, being born and dying. With his work "El beso", he marks the peak of his career and at the same time a change in his life and in his work.

With his subsequent turn towards color, Byzantine and sensual, large format allegories are born, where Klimt constitutes one of the most important aspects of modernist art.

The exhibition held at the Sorolla museum in 1992 was a great event. It deals with the Levantine painter Joaquín Sorolla and a painter, unknown to me, called Anders Leonard Zorn.

Let's see what the General Director of Fine Arts and Archives, José María, says Luzón Nogué, in a prologue that heads the catalog of said exhibition:

*Exhibiting the work of two artists of different nationalities –belonging to very different cultures– even if they were contemporaries and friends, is always opportune because it allows us to delve into the art of the time. In the case of the Swedish Anders Leonard Zorn (1860 - 1920) and the Spanish Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863 - 1923), which thanks to the collaboration of the two countries has become a reality first in Stockholm and then presented in Madrid. (...)*

*It is a coincidence that three years separate their respective dates of birth, marriage and death and that both were rewarded at the World's Fair in Paris in 1900; the "Grand Prix" of the Swedish and Hispanic-Portuguese pavilions. Did they meet then? Two years later, Zorn visited Sorolla's Madrid studio, in the Pasaje de la Alhambra, when he came as a companion to Prince Eugenio, who headed the Swedish delegation at the coronation of King Alfonso XIII. The frequent trips of both painters had to bring them together in Spain, France, England, and the United States, which had to foster their relationship, which culminated in the trip they made to Ávila in May 1912.*

The long queues of the public to enter, almost three hours, already announced the magnificence of the exhibition.

It was surprising to see the similarity of themes and compositions in their works. They were not plagiarisms, nor copies, they were stupendous coincidences in the development of his paintings. Broad, determined brushstrokes that build the shapes without delimiting the contours. The two self-portraits, the one by Zorn, 90 x 58.5 cm oil, signed in 1915; and Sorolla's 91.5 x 72.5 cm., in 1900, were extraordinary.

The beach and marine themes with nude figures bathing or in the sand, the portraits of high society people, the two wives reading the newspaper, the Swedish one in 1887 and the Levantine one in 1901, show us, once again, the masterful similarity of their styles.

Perhaps put to sharpen the eye of the subtle critic, for me, Sorolla surpasses the Swede in the bright flashes of the Mediterranean, which he would later transfer to the rest of the Spanish cities for the famous collection of The Hispanic Society of America.

It really was an unforgettable exhibition.

The Juan March Foundation also has an exhibition hall where works by international artists are presented. There we saw in 1982, the Piet Mondrian exhibition, with seventy works. This Dutch artist, who was born in 1872, said: *The only problem of art is to achieve a balance between the subjective and the objective, therefore, the work of art has to be <produced> <constructed>...*

Also there, we witnessed that of Dubuffet, Bauhaus, Kandinsky, Matisse, Paul Klee, and in 2002 to the magnificent exhibition on the works of the English painter Tournier.

In the rooms of the Palace of Libraries and Museums, we were able to admire "Contemporary North American Realism". A wide exhibition of works from 1960, with eighty artists including painters and sculptors. It was a somewhat disconcerting experience. Works of excellent quality, but all bathed in a metallic coldness, they were pure epidermis, they had no soul. We were amazed by a sculpture by John De Andrea, "Redheaded Woman in a Green Velvet Chair", from 1979, in polyvinyl and oil, life-size chair. There, a naked woman, seated and thoughtful, had hair embedded in the pubis and on the head. Like the work by Duane Hanson, "Man with a crutch", from 1980, vinyl in mold, polychrome with oil



and of natural size. He was seated, dressed in jeans with one leg cut away to reveal his leg in a cast. The plaster with signatures and drawings, open polo sweater. In the right hand a plastic cup and in the left the crutch.

Thoughtful, with real glasses, embedded mustache and stubble, and curly hair.

The expectation was so great that they had to post two guards, because the public touched that sculpture with disbelief.

Almost all the pictorial works were large. An acrylic by Chuck Closse, 274 x 213 cm. "Portrait of Mark", a huge, smiling head with white teeth and glasses through which inexpressive eyes looked at the astonished viewer. Or the work by Don Eddy, "C III", 1981. In which he appeared painted on a 185 x 122 cm canvas. a large number of objects: crystal ashtrays, silver cups, glass bottles, crystal balls of various sizes, flutes, hair dryers, toys with inscriptions, all placed on glass shelves in a huge glass cabinet. The game of reflections, transparencies and composition was overwhelming. I don't know how the artist could paint that. As well as the work by Paul Sarkisian, "Untitled Still Life" (with saddlebags), 1979. Acrylic on linen, 198 x 274 cm. It resembled a huge frosted glass on which some newsprint squares, a magazine, a folded newspaper, some folders and the backpack have been painted. Everything had a soft shadow showing through under the glass.

We left the exhibition a bit dazed. Too many phone booths metallic structures, pedestrian crossings where time had stopped.

The warm sun of the Paseo de Recoletos helped us to comfort ourselves. In the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, in 1993, we saw the exhibition of the realism of Antonio López, with 170 works, including sculptures, oil paintings, gouache, notes. There was realism with soul there, not only in the detailed representations of interiors or landscapes, but in the suggestive world that went from the first works to the last, with the masterful representations of the Gran Vía.

Lately we have visited the exhibition that the Prado dedicates to the French impressionist painter Manet. I was puzzled and disappointed. Along with works of relative quality, –"El pífano", and "El balcón", which is somewhat reminiscent of Goya's work, "Majas en el balcón", there are frankly bad works. Works with a lack of composition, with deficient drawing, out of tune with color. Works that produced for me the effect of finding myself in front of the paintings that are exhibited in the street of painters, in the typical Madrid flea market. They were totally commercial, by concept, color and intention. I came to the conclusion that some of those works were not his and were only signed by him. I did not understand how the painter of "Olimpia", "Lola de Valencia" or "Breakfast on the lawn", masterpieces for me, which are not included in this exhibition, had been able to paint a picture like "Fishing".

Using motifs from paintings by Rubens, Carracci or Constable, Manet creates a romantic composition with bright colors and out of context. He takes a self-portrait together with his lover Suzanne Lechoff, in an idyllic, false landscape with dramatic theatrics. Behind, a river and the boat where León, her son, is sitting, next to some fishermen. The composition closes with a garish rainbow that crosses the sky like a Christmas star.

In another room they have hung a painting, which to me seems like a sketch, because that cannot be a definitive work, "Spanish gentlemen and a child carrying a tray". There is a clumsiness and dirty color that even as a sketch is bad. The same thing happens to the work "Spanish hat and guitar, in a basket, before a theater curtain", of a rare composition, unresolved background and painted with fear.

In the work "Spanish Ballet", composed of eight figures that form a group, not they form a whole, since they are disproportionate in size and placement.

He has two frankly rejectable works: "Baudelaire's Mistress Seated on a Divan", whose right hand rests on the back of the green divan and is much larger than the head of the figure, whose black curls, painted with black ivory, have soiled the insistent carnations of the face. And "Woman in the window", (Angelines), so bad that it is something unspeakable.

The year 2003 ends, it is the month of December, when I conclude these memories, these memories, this inventory of my life. I am 74 years old and those who can live longer will not change, neither my personality nor my pictorial career. I still have projects that I would like to be able to do. I will try to summarize my character in a few pages.



*Three generations, 1998*

*Character, according to the dictionary is: a set of qualities or circumstances characteristics of a person that distinguish them by their way of being or acting from others.*

*It is the spiritual mark that remains in a person as an effect of knowledge or significant experience.*

*The character can be acquired, hereditary or environmental.*

I was born in a middle class family. I was an only child. My father only had one sister and my paternal grandfather, Ramón, was also an only child. I only have one son and, for now, one grandson. That's right, we constitute a little prolific family.

Due to my date of birth, I am an Aquarius and, although I do not believe much in astrology, the characteristic features of Aquarius are fulfilled in me. I have always adapted to all things in life, without trauma or depression.

I am patient and slow, I always take time to react to the unexpected, which has helped me not to rush into decisions. I am not vehement,

things impress me in their fair measure, but I know how to show them very little. Maybe shy. I have never been one of those who have shown feelings in a strident way. I don't know if I would have liked to be one of those who yell and cheer on their soccer team. Anyway, I haven't seen a game in sixty years. Nor am I one of those who at a rally raise banners or flags demonstrating their political ardor. Nor of those who shout, Bravo! at concerts, although I liked it a lot. I applaud in a restrained way and that's enough for me.

I have never cried in the cinema watching a movie that moved me. I am passionate, but I don't know how to show that passion. When I like something, it seems that it is only mine. It creates in me a kind of obsession that lasts a long time, sometimes years. When I was little, I was six years old, they showed me a wild plant that they told me was called "Ferri busterri", that name got inside me and grew like climbing ivy covering all my obsession. Those words, that kind of jitanjáfora, sounded inside me like heavenly music.

I would repeat them hundreds, thousands of times. To any question that was asked of me, I answered with Ferri busterri. That minimalist, repetitive obsession lasted me for many months, until one day my father, fed up with that singsong, gave me a resounding slap that put an end to it.

They say that: *Many times it is possible to recognize people born under this air sign by the frequent use they make of the word "friendship".*

I have always had many friends. As a child, I already liked being friends with everyone. I was and am a very good friend of my friends. Perhaps, not having had siblings, that need to communicate, to share things, to keep secrets, was what prompted me to trust my friends. But I felt, and feel very much, the duplicity of some of them. I always give myself as I am, and it hurts me that a friend, or at least, that's how I consider them, disappoints me at a given moment.

The writer Camus, in his work "The Fall", classifies people into four stages: Those who, faced with any event, forget and forgive; those who forgive but do not forget; those who forget and do not forgive and those who neither forgive nor forget.

It seems to me that I belong to the latter group. When someone, in whom I have placed my trust, disappoints me, they create such a situation in me that it is very difficult for me to forget and also to forgive.

Friendship needs the frequency of relationship. Of my childhood friends, those of the "panda", I have only kept a friendship with Antonio Revert, because I have had a continuous relationship with him.

When I started high school we were many boys and girls. Later, when we finished, each one went away to study their careers and the close friend became just friendship. From those years, Salvador Pastor, Tito for friends and his wife Amalia, are the ones who remain as friends from a student period.

Precisely, a few years ago Tito came up with the idea that the friends of the course, survivors of high school, get together for a celebratory meal. And so we did, remaining as instituted for all years. We usually meet: Concha Raduan, Ana María Mataix, Pilar Ferrándiz, Mari Carmen Carbonell, (died in 2002), Pepa Botella my wife, Salvador Pastor, Rafael Blanes, José Iborra, Juan Gomis, Fernando de Gracia, (died in 1999) , me too. But between us there is only friendship.

José Antonio Cortazar, our notary friend, once said of my character: *Ramón, you are like an elephant, serious, slow and sure.* And the Rvd. D. Juan Blanquer, in our chats between friends, in which I did not easily give up my opinions, said: *Ramón, I don't know how you have such a rich palette of colors, because in your character, in your conclusions, you are white or black , you do not have intermediate nuances.*

And it is true, for my points of view, there is no middle ground. Either with me or against me.

I easily receive energy from others. When I like a person, I know that I am receiving their positive energy. It is like a magnetic exchange, there is a mutual attraction. But I also receive large downloads of negative energy. Adverse things feel terrible to me. Until they settle inside me, I have a hard time getting over it. And there are a lot of people with negative energy loose in the world.

I know I have a good mood. I know how to take some setbacks in life through the good mood, and this gives me optimism.

I don't get depressed easily, I try to find solutions in difficult situations. This has helped me a lot Pepa. She has a well-defined, balanced character and knows how to react safely and evenly to any event. When I fell in love with her as a boy, it was as the lyrics of this song say. *An angel was / what I found in life. / And his look was so sweet / blue green the color of sea.*

So much time together, without weighing us down, through sorrows and joys. *In sickness and in health...* We have lived intensely. She my painting, my art, and I hers, poetry. Together we longed for the son, who was delayed, but in the end he arrived, completing our love and our life.

Our son, Valencian by birth, had a hard time adjusting to Madrid at first. He came from a kindergarten in Valencia, but life in Madrid soon adopted him and he grew up in his environment. Primary education, high school and university. He has always been a good student and we have never had to resort to any teacher to guide him or help him in his studies. He spent his summers happily with his cousins and friends from the town of Agres. He finished his Physics career with a specialty in Solid State, he obtained "Cum laudem" unanimously in his PhD from the Autonomous University of Madrid. and the experimental part was carried out at the LURE synchrotrons in Paris. And later, the work directed him towards the "Miguel Hernández" Faculty in Elche. In 1996 he met what would be his wife, Vanina. She is a wonderful girl, beautiful and very sensible, the complement for my son. Born in Argentina, she also adapted to life in Madrid. They got married in 1997 and a year later a boy was born, Sebastián, our grandson, who delights us and fills us with happiness.

our autumn life We are his "iaios", as he calls us. Vanina's parents are her grandparents.

I'm persistently stubborn, says my wife. But it is true that I do not give up easily and it is very difficult for me to give in when I am fully convinced and sure of what I think or feel.

I really like freedom. I have to always feel untethered, so  
It has never been good for me to belong to any group, neither political nor religious.

Once we joined a political party. It was a fledgling party. We went with the illusion of collaborating, but that of "party discipline" and having to admit ideas with which we often did not agree, or seeing the tripping of some affiliates for climbing the top positions, let us down.

Another time it was a religious congregation. Everything was great while you were in spiritual retreat. There we were all brothers, we shared mass, table and tablecloth, but when our humanity emerges in daily life and with it the great wheel of life, either you ride it or you stay alone and the fraternity vanishes.

I have never liked goodbyes. If when Clothos cut the thread of my existence, someone there asked me, what would you like to be in a new life? I would say, without hesitation. Painter!. Oh!. But wherever I go, Pepa, she will come with me. OK?.

In December 2003 we finished the reports. Pepa had given them literary form and they were on the computer. My son Ramón scanned all the photographs that we thought to include, made a first layout and we saw the result of a possible book. We needed to plan its edition and it occurred to us to visit Miguel Valor, deputy for Culture in the Alicante Provincial Council and a good friend by countryman. We didn't have any preconceived ideas, we talked to him about our project, but he knew how to turn it around and very skilfully proposed us to hold an anthological exhibition of Ramón's work. He showed us and gave us several catalogs of painters so that we would know the format, we talked about a traveling exhibition, and without realizing it, we postponed the book and left the visit to go to the Palacio de la Diputación, see the room and more or less, calculate the number of works that could be located.

On our second trip to finalize the anthology, he told us that the exhibition would be held at the Gravina Palace, "MUBAG" and when we visited the place, we realized that of the hundred projected works, only about thirty-five would fit and not with a good distribution chronological. We met the director, Mr. Vicente Rodes, friendly and easy-going, and Joseerre, daughter of the painter Pérez Gil; pleasant, sincere and very maternal: Everything beautiful, precious, pleasant, splendid, artistic, commendable and prestigious.

For the preparation and assembly of the exhibitions we had to appoint a curator and we thought of our friend Antonio Castelló, who produced a large catalog by format and content.

The inauguration in Alicante took place on April 28, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. There were the director of the Museum, D. Vicente Rodes; the mayor of Alcoy, Mr. Jorge Sedano; the Councilor for Culture, D<sup>a</sup>. Trini Miro; the provincial deputy D. Javier Castañer and the curator of the exhibition, D. Antonio Castelló. The exhibition was inaugurated: Congratulations, hugs, kisses from friends, acquaintances, countrymen, visitors and dedication of catalogs to locals and strangers.

Later, a small group of friends, we went to dinner and thus ended the inauguration of "MUBAG", and I was still the same. All that assembly: transfer of works, lights, spaces, concerns, worries. Did they contribute to improving my personality? I should keep fighting and I would always continue to be the painter Ramón Castañer.

The Greeks already believed in destiny. The oracles and the sibyls predicted the future, but my destiny was mute, it had no voice or articulated a word, only facts, ways and forms.

One day in May 2003, I had hematuria. I didn't know what was causing it, but the fear of a diagnosis makes us hide reality, I kept quiet and concealed it, I had no symptoms, pain, or discomfort, therefore, I did not want to give importance to what I imagined.

Several months passed, and one day Pepa discovered the secret that she had hidden so much. He begged me and convinced me, faced with my stubbornness, to go find a doctor to diagnose me. So I did it. They recommended me a name. Consultations, ultrasound, intravenous contrasts; but according to the doctor's opinion, that was of no importance. I was afraid, but if a person, whom you look for as an expert, tells you that it is nothing, you cling to that "nothing", like a shipwrecked man to a board. And so two years passed. Hematuria became part of my life and on many occasions disturbed my peace of mind.

Was it chance or fate? One day I found myself in the hospital, where I was going to have a new ultrasound, with a doctor friend and he asked me about the hematuria and when he told him that it continued the same, he was horrified: -That cannot be allowed! Come with me-. We walked through corridors and entered the office of a doctor, colleague and urologist, Dr. Muñoz-Delgado: courteous and professional, he ordered me a cystopathic urinalysis. When I picked it up several days later, they handed me the supersealed envelope; the question was whether to open it or not, and I chose to wait for the doctor's verdict. I went to the consultation by myself, I don't like Pepa accompanying me at all, I feel bad, like diminished. It's different, if I had to accompany her. She tells me that this is machismo, but I left alone.

The doctor opened the envelope and told me that it had come out, positive, and before my question, he explained that a small speck appeared in the bladder that we would have to study, but without giving it much importance. I left happy, but I had not read the analysis. When I opened the envelope at home I was so upset that it took me a while to react: urothelial carcinoma. It was getting dark, but for us a long, very long night had begun, one that would last a long time.

New radiographic and cystoscopic studies and after the result, the doctor told us that we had to go to the operating room on June 10 to perform a cystotomy, but precisely on the 10th the opening of my anthological exhibition in Ibi was scheduled. However, the doctor considered surgical intervention essential. And I had no choice in choosing. I called my son Ramón and his friend Antonio Castelló, who was the curator of the exhibition, so that they could agree and, based on my observations, distribute the works chronologically in the Hermitage of San Vicente, a place that I knew from other exhibitions.

At 8:00 p.m. on that day, the exhibition was inaugurated by the Exma. Mayor of Ibi, Mayte Parra, who excused my absence. My son addressed the public and was moved to explain the reason for my non-attendance. The Councilor for Culture and Antonio Castelló closed the presentations.

Pepa and I experienced the inauguration through the calls of the many friends who attended the event.

When I was discharged, they gave me the protocol for the 12 chemotherapy sessions. The doctor and my family hoped that this medication would reduce the virulence of the disease. And something strange, I don't know what resources the mind has, or what reaction occurs somewhere in our being, that I felt an enormous desire to paint. It is as if I thought that life was going to escape me and I had so many things to say through my painting, so much love for life to express it, that I began to paint dizzily. The canvases followed one another, and they were impregnated with colors that were unthinkable for me: Persia yellow that dyed everything it touched with orange fire. Ocher, yellow, white shaded with violet, emerald green and silver green. A nuanced explosion of dry, sad, decayed, languid, morbid leaves that no longer existed but contributed to giving the canvas a tone of strength within an explosion of light, color, desire for life and struggle. The black had disappeared from my palette.

The inauguration in Alcoy, which took place on September 8 in the halls of the CAM, was pending of the anthological exhibition. On this occasion, I was able to distribute the works to my liking, adapting them chronologically in a large room and placing the sketches that completed the show in another, smaller room. The inaugural act was attended by Mr. Javier Castañer, provincial deputy; D. Juan Vicente Capó, area director of the CAM; D. Antonio Castelló and a large audience, friends from Alcoy, from Ibi, and of course, many friends from Agres, where Pepa and I are adopted children.

The act was very brilliant, I found myself in great company and during the days that it was open to the public it was very visited: interviews, press, radio and a good commentary on José Luis Seguí's exhibition that is included in the Press chapter.

We had to return to Madrid because the urologist was waiting for us and we were confident that the tests to be carried out would be favorable, but although there was no metastasis, the carcinoma had reproduced in the bladder, and I had to undergo a new operation, which was carried out in the month of November. You wait for everything to be resolved and they repeat to you: You have to have courage! You are strong and I'm sure you can handle this! But in many moments you feel like a fly in a spider web and a "bad grape" enters you, and you have to survive and make new wings that take you back to a place where "good morning, means, good morning"

Time was running fast, the date of All Saints, the Immaculate Conception and "from the Immaculate Conception to Nadal, dessert dies cabal", New Year and Epiphany, we are already in 2006. In the month of March a new operation, but in this Sometimes a fight is established between me and my illness, it is as if we were playing hide-and-seek: "I hide and you count to ten". The new carcinoma has hidden, and I keep counting, not to ten, but to a hundred, a hundred thousand, a million..., and the "bastard" doesn't show up. I am prescribed BCG, chemotherapy sessions that start on April 28, until August 25. But BCG did not discover the intruder either, and here I am waiting for the solution to the problem.

And there are still more. Heart attacks, operating room, catheterization, angioplasty, stents... but so much struggle is not possible, so much braiding of health, life, death, hope, we must continue! And in the end, I don't know if I lead the fight or the fight leads me. But once again, painting makes me strong, and I feel like a tightrope walker, keeping my balance so as not to fall into the void.

The urologist finished his work and now it is the surgeon who will have to take care of the problem, my problem.

But it's Christmas, Christmas 2006. My family: my children and my grandson are coming to Madrid. Pepa prepares the nativity scene, the lights, the pasta and memories of other times come back to my mind and are renewed every year. *Mother at the door there is a child/ more beautiful than a beautiful sun/...* From the Puerta del Sol the twelve chimes are broadcast, toasts, kisses, and my eyes get moist. Will 2007 be a year of happiness?



## CHAPTER XVII

*Flashes without continuity*



The *flashback* is like a flash that shows us events that occurred previously and that come to our memory magnified, perhaps by recollection, but veiled as if we were visualizing them through a thick fog.

At the moment I write I am seeing a group of people who are gray or shaded in violet -this is already professional deformation- whose features I could not distinguish. Maybe their names? Could be. But from that shady, informalist group, a clear, real figure emerges. A young woman, plump, with squinty eyes and a histrionic laugh, out of tune, accompanied by eardrum-busting shrieks, which she repeated. I pretty girl! The girl is pretty, pretty, pretty! The girl loves Ramoncín. According to my mother, she felt adoration for me and asked imperiously.

Leave me the child and I'll cradle him like a doll! My mother, unconvinced, gave in, and Enriqueta, that was the woman's name, rocked me, cradled me and squeezed me with a hysterical outburst. I could smell her acrid armpits and her soft breasts that crushed my face.

From some mezzanine a jukebox could be heard with the voice of Imperio Argentina singing "Remember those hours of pleasure, remember those sweet hours..."

---



What I do remember perfectly was a tricycle. My trike. I don't know who gave it to me. It was made of metal, with white solid rubber wheels and metal spokes. The wooden saddle and the handlebars had red cups at the ends, like the ones used for the ludo game. It was rusty and creaked loudly. I didn't know how to pedal and someone was pushing me. Move the handlebars that you hit the wall!

Not like that, not like that!

---

The neighbor on the second floor, we lived on the third, had the name of Virgin Guadalupana, her daughter, who was named after her mother, was a year older than me and in our spare time we played. Among his toys he had a nickel-plated bed that they would have bought in a nickel-plated bed shop -Art Deco prevailed at that time- that was in front of our house. Her parents' bed was the same as the doll's and right at the foot of said bed they had an Art Deco moon cabinet and in the center a hole, like a kind of niche, in which an image of a doll rested pompously. Saint George decorated, silver, gold and painted; jumping white horse, Roman officer costume with green tunic and chain mail, silver helmet with a large feather and his right hand raised high holding an arrow. I was very impressed by the scene, because the saint had an indifferent attitude to what was unfolding. It was as if he didn't care at all about shooting some Moors who were lying down with terrifying attitudes, bulging eyes that seemed to suffer the unspeakable.

I also remember a red-haired blonde woman -natural or oxygenated- very painted. White face with rice powder, black eyes with excess mascara, very thin eyebrows with brown pencil and heart-shaped cyclamen red lips. Cyclamen?. Why was that color called cyclamen? I don't know why, I didn't like him. She was wearing a printed mermaid dress and red shoes with huge heels.

My father had many workers in his factory and one of them was nicknamed "quinçet". She was his "darling." He was tall, skinny, and well-built, and she swaggered at his side like an Andalusian pony.

One day at the factory, playing, I bumped into her and almost knocked her to the ground. She slapped me and I angrily called her a pig. He went straight to tell my mother, much to my rebuke. But to justify myself, I told my mother that she was a woman with a bad face. My mother told me what she meant by that, and I answered her triumphantly, like someone about to discover an enigma that no one knows: "A woman with a mean face is one who doesn't wear panties." What a slap it sounded!

It would be the summer of 1934, some friends of my parents invited us to spend a weekend at their farmhouse. I had never left my house, that for me was new and I was excited. That family, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman, had several children, all very educated, smug and of good upbringing: Thank you! Please! Father, do you give us your permission to go down to the threshing floor? And to the era that we went and there we sat down. The afternoon was in August, with a haze that could be cut, we wore little white piqué hats that I don't know where they came from. The embarrassment was accentuated by the constant "riqui – raque" of the cicadas that, like a tuneless chorus, pierced the afternoon.

In the center of the threshing floor, a man with a straw hat led two brown mules that, blindfolded and trotting briskly, dragged the threshing machine that ground the straw to the beat of a honeyed, sweet and slightly sad song: *les meues mules son molt guapes / and they run with two twinkles/ there were no mules mes llaugeres/ nor as pretty as them. Go mules!*

At night dinner. The maids, with caps, served the table: soup, fish or meat, melon for dessert, pastries and candied sweets. After dinner, one of the daughters danced and sang "La muñeca de París", which *Josefina Baker* had made fashionable. The girl imitated the rhythmic movements of the doll, while the parents sang, accompanying the mechanical gestures of the little girl with their palms. When the girl grew older, she was prosecuted as a nun and cloistered herself in a convent. A lifetime box for that innocent doll.



Around those same years, the French car manufacturer *Peugeot* launched a model that revolutionized the aesthetics of passenger cars, with a streamlined line in the shape of a fish and the peculiarity that the headlights had been removed from the upper part of the wings. fenders to embed them between the radiator and the grill that covered it, giving it a cross-eyed look. An international house patented the miniature of that car, with a perfect replica. It was a small nickel-plated car, with four normal wheels and a fifth wheel, set across the front. And this was the famous "And it does not fall" stroller. My father bought one, wound it up, left it on the table, and when the toy was about to fall, the cross wheel came into action and turned around to the astonishment of young and old.

Xaudaró was a great cartoonist and humorist, he was the Mingote of the 1930s. In the magazine "BLACK AND WHITE", Xaudaró's joke appeared daily: plump women with puny husbands, skinny gypsies, solemnly poor, witty, witty jokes, and some politicians; but in all of them, like a rubric, he drew a puppy: scared, funny, peeing, scratching fleas, decorative, clown, fearful or threatening.

One day the cut-out pieces for the construction of the puppy appeared in the magazine. My mother bought white felt that she cut out to match the patterns. The puppy appeared sitting on its hind legs. The pieces were sewn and filled with sawdust, the snout with a little Chinese ink, glued glass eyes, a blue ribbon around the neck with a bell and a huge bow. That little dog, about 35 cm tall, was a spectator of various events that happened in my family for many years.

---

Those neighbors of my parents on San Francisco street, in 1937, in the middle of the civil war and since my father was in jail, invited me to spend a week in a little house they had in the countryside. I was a somewhat indomitable boy, perhaps because of the loneliness of my home, my father in Pla Vallesa, a concentration camp in Valencia, and the bad company on the streets, they formed a character in constant rebellion, that I was not comfortable with myself and with nothing around me. That girl who had the name of Virgin Guadalupana continued polite and obedient and that created in me a rejection that I expressed by doing pranks. I made myself, I don't know how, a slingshot, and I threw stones at the birds: Mom, Ramoncín is killing birds! It was not true, because none of them hit. He took ears of corn and shelled them, they were ammunition that he threw at any improvised target: Mom, he's dirtying the walls! There were many nests of ants, black, large, shiny, and one by one he killed them and buried them in tiny graves. Mom, it's killing ants and it makes me so sick!

I used to sleep in a room with two beds. I don't know how to explain it, or how it happened, but one morning, when I half woke up, I saw a girl in the next bed. -Would it be family of the owners?-. Suddenly, he pushed back the sheet and sat on the edge of the bed. She looked at me, but I pretended to be asleep and looked at her with half-open eyes. Her nightgown was pulled up and she was naked to the waist, her feet dangling off the floor. It was the first time in my life that I had seen a female sex. The girl had dark pigmentation, a small navel, but what dazzled me, admired me, and astonished me, was that she had only one long, curly, black hair that curled around her sex like a climbing vine.

Many years have passed, perhaps too many. She grew up, as we all did, then she got married, but whenever I saw her on the street I remembered her hair, her sex and the dawn of an August morning and my life.

---

I have already commented in chapter II of this book that my parents separated after the war. I attended the separation mute, perplexed and unable to take part. I had become a shy boy and for this reason I watched as a spectator the departure of my father, who had settled on the floor of the factory, while I stayed with my mother. On Thursdays I had to eat with him, he would go down to the shed and

my father ordered food in a restaurant. He tried to entertain me and be fatherly by taking an interest in my studies, but we really didn't know what to talk about. Later, when I returned home, my mother would ask me, ad nauseam, a thousand things about my father.

On one of those Thursdays, my father had prepared a surprise for me: a huge box containing a rope train, with a locomotive, a coal wagon, and a passenger wagon. I had never had a train and that dazzled me

After eating, I hurried up to my house, and triumphantly entered with my box and I told my mother: -It's a surprise that dad has given me!-

I removed the fruit bowl that adorned the table, and one by one I assembled the rails, they were difficult to assemble, but I finally succeeded. I put the wagon that was hooked to the coal wagon and waited for the locomotive. I took the machine I wound it up and held the wheels with my fingers and attached it to the car and the train began to go round and round. I was staring at it, and suddenly, my mother came out of the kitchen and without words, without warning, she gave a tremendous swipe to the toy that went flying through the air. I was taken aback, but I didn't cry. My mother did not lash out at the toy, but at the personification of my father. I felt stunned, shaken, then silence and my mother began to cry.

The train machine, alone, maddened, continued to run across the dining room floor.

---

After the war in 1940, I started high school. He was not a good student, he went to school, like Sisyphus serving his sentence; a task that he had to perform out of obligation, without protest, accepting it with indifference. The wound was not bleeding. "Do you have everything in your bag, the books for today's subjects, your homework, your sandwich?" I was heading to school, like an automaton without a soul, and as compensation I invented a game: When I walked through the shadows, it meant death, and I had to run until I reached the sun, which was life; then my walk was leisurely and alternated life and death until I got to school.

Only the movies advertised on the billboards encouraged my existence. One day I saw the premiere of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" in them. Film that was shot in the USA in 1938 and premiered in Alcoy in 1941. It was a cartoon film, in color, that was widely accepted by the public, especially by kids my age. The tape was friendly, enlivened with tender and sweet songs: the song of the well, that of the dwarfs or the famous waltz "My heart tells me."

All my life I kept a good memory of that movie. Many years later, many..., when my son was about six years old, it was shown again in a neighborhood cinema here in Madrid. I explained to my son how beautiful the movie was, recreating myself in the characters: the stepmother, the mirror, the dwarfs and the witch... . We got the tickets, but that day I couldn't go, and Pepa took the child to the movies. At the exit, there I was waiting for them with the illusion of seeing the joy reflected in the child's face. Among the crowd I saw them leave, I approached him and asked him interested: Did you like the movie? It's very nice! TRUE?. His answer was clear, resounding, without remission: -A bullshit! ...?

---

I have a friend, rather, we have since he is a friend of Pepa's as well as mine, who is full of health, friendliness and, above all, good humour. It's ingenious, I'll explain why. One day we were eating and the phone rang. Ramón, my son, would have been fifteen years old at the time, came out to answer it. At the moment he came in and told me that they were calling me from Paris. -Paris, can't that be? I got on the phone. A stiff voice asked me. "Monsieur Castanyer?" Je sui monsieur Anjou. And in difficult Spanish he told me that he was the director of the Louvre Museum in Paris, and that they were interested in a work of mine that they had seen in an art magazine. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and when I was stunned I heard a voice tell me: -You've stung, huh! I am Juan, to that my imitation has been well? -.

On another occasion, an agricultural cooperative in Segovia called me to send me the truckload of onions that I had requested. They must have been wrong. -No no. - A voice with a Segovian accent told me. -Don Ramón Castañer Segura, street such, number which, district 28028? Well, here we have prepared your order of onions to send it to you. -But how a truck of onions!. You guys are crazy. -I said.

-Ha ha ha...! -You've stung again, I'm Juan.

One day at ten in the morning, the time Pepa had left, the phone rang.

-Yes tell me. -Señorrra doñaaaa Pepaa de Castaniier? -and I, without thinking, answered him. The onions! The phone went silent and the question was repeated again. -Pepaaa de Castanieeer?. -And me again-. -The onions!. -Look, I don't understand anything you say to me. I am Mr. Schmith, an American poet that Mrs. Pepa de Castanier has to do a reading of my verses.

So, I wanted to die, and I told him. -Pepa, my wife has gone to the market to buy onions. Leave me your number and when Pepa comes to buy the onions I'll tell her to call you. This time, it wasn't Juan!

The summer of 1988 was my summer, a summer unlike any other in my life: the summer of the San Juan Bosco mural. For me, that job completely disrupted the usual rhythm of my life. I have previously explained all the coronary events that happened to me, but it was in the month of September and during my convalescence in Agres, when an event, perhaps insignificant, had a therapeutic effect that helped me in difficult moments.

One day our nephew Eduardo, with whom we always talk about the world of music, came up to visit us and asked me if I knew Symphony No. 2 by Jean Sibelius. I did not know the work, but he told me it was a true work of art and gave me a tape that read: Symphony No. 2 in D Major, OP. 43 by Jean Sibelius, in its four movements. Allegreto, (Tempo andante, ma rubato Vivacissimo and Finale (Allegro moderato.) It was performed by the Orq.

Vienna Philharmonic. Directed by Lorin Maset.

And in those afternoons of convalescence, long, too long, too empty, always aware of my evolution, that music was a true discovery for me, it helped me fill my life with hope, the future, trust in something new, in something that I conceived as an artistic creation and the grandeur of that symphony invited me to share, to go back in that immense landscape, to be a cloud, to be an eternal space and dissolve in a plastic rainbow. My heart



Heartbroken, I wanted to be a mural, the mural that one day in August was put on hold and to which I wanted with all my might to return. That symphony was for me, he "get up and walk".

Whenever I have listened to this music afterwards, I revive the memory of those days and I feel the same desire to fight.



*Lunar Pierrot; 100 x 81cm*

It gives me the effect that the puppet puppets will have the same sensation, when they are transported from one city to another, that I have, when they have transferred me in an emergency ambulance.

In August 2006 I was admitted to a hospital in Alcoy for a coronary condition and they had to take me to a hospital in Alicante for an emergency operation.

-Is this the patient who goes to Perpetual Help in Alicante? Some protocol greetings, and immediately they take you and give you a flip from bed to stretcher, they put your seat belt on, they hang the drip and they march through the corridors. Since I had the cane on top of me, it seemed to me that it was like the transfer of the seated statue of a medieval nobleman who, hugging his sword, rests in any Spanish cathedral, only missed the dog of fidelity resting at my feet.

The screeching of the wheels made everyone and everyone turn away, with surprising indifference or merciful curiosity. Fluorescent ceiling lights, fire alarm cells, door lintels, everything ran at passive speed. Suddenly, it was done

light. The sun and the ambulance. The wheels of the stretcher have to fit with the rails and several times you try without success, but finally, splat! That's it. -Are you comfortable? They plug in my oxygen, two doors slam and then the shrill sound of the ambulance. A doctor and an assistant accompanied me. -Boy!, -said the assistant to the driver- Don't go wrong again. We have to go along the Ibi highway. -and turning to me, he said.-When we were coming, the bastard put us through the Carrasqueta, and the fucker gave us a turn, "why?"

Through some small windows I saw a familiar landscape go by, the Barranco de la Batalla, the "Frare", the Puig pines, which hastily said goodbye to me and little by little sadness invaded me and I don't know why, suddenly, I remembered "Good morning Sadness." If I had been able to cry, my tears would have mixed with the road dust emitted by the ambulance, to plunge me into a deep, black abyss from which I would have liked never to emerge.

Behind the ambulance, like an announcement of hope came my family, and that hope gripped me, I desperately grabbed myself to get out of the abyss that so deceptively invited me to enter.

---

How many times have I been in rooms in hospitals or residences, they are all the same: those in Madrid, those in Alcoy or those in Alicante. In them time has stopped, rather, time does not count. Cronos doesn't like these places and flees from them, leaving us abandoned there, silent, as if floating in outer space.

Everything is aseptic, the bed on wheels, like a pompous hearse; white enameled iron, nickel tubes, at the head a curved tube that looks like a medieval gallows and serves as a handle. Robotic automation, taking glucose, the thermometer, the tensiometer... and suddenly, the door opens noisily: -You have to take this pill and then get up-. I put on my slippers and dressing gown, look at the clock, 11:05, and start walking around the room. In these short walks, I remembered the beasts of traveling circuses. The lion or tiger automatically crosses the reduced space of the cage, from right to left and from left to right. This is how I walked from the back wall to the window and from the window to the back wall, and so on and on. Sometimes he would pull back the curtain and look at the sea. The Alicante Mare Nostrum, and there were sloops, sailboats and an enormously potbellied oil tanker and there were happy people, enjoying themselves, playing sports or fishing, but they were free, and Cronos was with them passing fast.

I don't eat in my room. He looked at the clock again. It's not possible!, 11:15. I sit down, put my headphones on and connect to that station. Terrible news, the world is in a bad state, useless political summits and suddenly, announcements: to combat constipation, to lose weight, to whiten teeth, to remove wrinkles, to learn English, to go to the Caribbean, stop stop Stop...

A beep sounds announcing the time signal. 11:30 in Spain; one hour less in the Canary Islands. Canary Islands?. And how will they manage to serve so many thousands of emigrants! So much bothers me and I turn off the radio, take off my headphones and pick up the newspaper and tell myself. Hell, but if it's the same as the radio! The door opens softly. -Hello!-, it's Pepa who comes from having breakfast. My wife, my partner, my love. I suffer more from seeing her suffer than from my own suffering. Several times, when I was in an operating room to make this or that decision regarding a surgical solution, seeing his face pleading with the doctor for the solution, his anguish made me feel sorry. United we have walked this life for more than half a century,

since that day we promised to be together for better or for worse, for health and for illness and we have fulfilled it with love.

The day the doctor enters the room, asks me how I am and tells me that he can sign me out of the hospital, and that I can get out of there, for me it is like rejoining the world. Dressing again in my clothes, picking up everything we had in the closet, going down the corridor almost on tiptoe, like in the story of "Thumbnail", so that the ogre doesn't wake up and can hold us back. Go out, see the street again, the landscape as if freshly painted, clean, redone, the acacias, the traffic lights, the people, their bustle. We look for a taxi. We give the address, and the car begins its march towards home. Pepa and I hold hands and squeeze hard, very hard, and in that squeeze, without words, we are saying to each other: We have won again! That is so exciting, so full of joy, like going out on the shoulders of a bullring, like releasing pigeons on Easter day. It's like starting over.





## PRESENTATIONS AND PRESS



*Fiestas Magazine Cover – 1988. (Alcoy)*



**First Exhibition at the "Art Gallery" GRIFÉ & ESCODA SL  
1954, Barcelona  
Presentation of José Segrelles**

*"...I always like to see the paintings of Ramón Castañer, because of the joy, serene concept and evident sincerity that his work brings together, which has unusual qualities..."*

**Exhibition in "Sala Muñoz", 1956, Valencia  
In the magazine "Ribalta" comment by Eduardo López Chavarri**

*The creations of Ramón Castañer, an artist from Alcoy, have been exhibited showing the different ways of interpreting the natural that the lucky painter possesses, in all of which there are twinned together sensitivity and technique, and knowing how to use all the possibilities of the trade, to show that having heart and retina and pulse, mastering the technique and putting it at the service, true inspired works of art are produced, pleasant to contemplate and of perfect solvency. Ramón Castañer can and knows how to use all the modern pictorial tricks, but he does not use it to show them, but to better build his work. And this always results, not painting with adjectives (surrealist, neo-impressionist, expressionist, etc.), but what really has to be and cannot be replaced with adjectives: painting-painting. For this reason, within the variety of procedures that he knows how to use, the beautiful personality of the artist appears, with his fair assessment of tones and perspectives, without having to resort to cerebral disquisitions so that salient perspectives and depths appear on the flat surface of a canvas. .*

*In addition to the spiritual "intention" that always appears in Ramón Castañer's works, it is noteworthy his sense of masses of color and his (perhaps the most difficult to achieve) harmonious distribution to achieve the desired effect.*

*This avoids the monotony of the procedure, avoids the recipe, and for this reason each painting by Castañer is a creation. It is enough to mention, for example, the figures of women. Contrast, for example, the calm figure, with a sweet pose, a calm soul and balanced beauty of the artist's wife with the courageous painting of a Moorish woman, defiant and at the same time suspicious and distrustful.*

*Because Castañer has been to Africa and has captured beautiful color impressions there. But at the same time, Valencia also gives him motifs of color studies ("La Feria", "Día lluvioso") and other times, incidentally with singular mastery, he presents notes of Morocco in aquatint, no less well interpreted. And, in addition, flowers, original still lifes and well interpreted figures (for example, the "Labrador", or the humorous silhouettes of mountebanks, or the perspectives of Agres...)*

*A good exhibition and a painter... painter.*

---

**Exhibition "Industrial Circle", 1957 Alcoy  
Presentation of Antonio Revert Cortés**

**To Ramón Castañer, painter and friend**

*Dear Ramón: You have preferred that it be me, young like you –it still seems like yesterday when we played stop and shoot, in the Glorieta– who preludes this exhibition of your portraits. And I get happy. It is convenient that youth lean on youth, to be able to break through. Also, I have faith in your painting and I sincerely believe in you. So let's get down to business.*

*In a few months, perhaps less, when your work in the Santa María presbytery is discovered to the public, you will be criticized. Of flattery and rigors. At worst, more of these than of those. However, go ahead! In art, repetition is counterproductive. You can't herd a shape and stay in it. Velázquez will always be Velázquez. What we cannot do is imitate Velázquez, without going beyond him. Therefore, new paths must be explored.*

*Emerge new sensibilities that open virgin paths for us. I know that the painful thing about the case is that, for people, artistic value is given based on what is human.*

*Rather, the object is only artistic insofar as it is real. You will understand, then, that with that myopia they cannot see beyond three palms. A special sensitivity is needed, so as not to pass through the painting and <wallow passionately in the human reality that is alluded to in the work> –said Ortega, with his usual brilliance–.*

*When judging this stupendous gallery of portraits, which you show us today, people will go straight to recognize the figure; but it will not stop minds in the purely artistic values. It will cross the canvas, as if it were a ghost, hardly noticing, in that color of yours so vibrant, in those planes so brave or in that brushstroke of a master hand. It is a pity. Because I have seen you wield the spatula like a sword. Worrying about light and contrasting shadows, over and over again, I know how much painting worries you: painting as an artistic sacrament.*

*Friend Ramón, we cannot betray future generations. It must be painted bearing witness to our time. Despite the fact that it is hard and does not officially admit the current type of painting. So continue as you do. Paint without fear, as you think it should be painted, even if later to live you have to smear walls. Take a walk around Paris or Rome... Saturate yourself with techniques, landscapes, experiences. And then, in the solitude of your studio, paint, paint incessantly, as God makes you understand. Sweat your painting, artistic labor that it is, and offer, in the end, the fruit of your brave spatula, that spatula that you wield like a firebrand and that will also win battles for you, like El Cid, after death.*

---

**Exhibition in "La Pinacoteca", 1959, Barcelona  
Presentation of Jose Antonio Cortazar**

*"Ramón Castañer, solid and strong like his painting, brings, from his native Alcoy –let's underline it in these times of alluvial, monotonous and multitudinous art–, a leading restlessness, a sharply peculiar message. He has not allowed his work to slide into the quagmires of Levantine sweetness so propitious to the danger of chrome, nor*



*by the easy and ancestral attraction –oh sirens of a fossil classicism!– of the Mediterranean light; not even the magical spell of the elusive air of Paris, has managed to throw its firm voyage adrift. (The landscape influences the artist but the artist also imprints his warm imprint on the landscape.)*

*Castañer's painting sprouts like a sparkling fountain of youth; he comes out from within with that same interior light that explodes dramatically in his paintings; it is a bubbling of ancient blood that emerges to the aesthetic surface with depth, with responsibility, without anecdote.*

*Young art for its courage, which is neither daring nor insolence, is that of Ramón Castañer. His work has courage and, at the same time, serenity. And passion. But a hidden passion – masterfully subject to the canon – that emerges, from time to time, above the magisterial lesson of form, in those blood-dying sunsets, in those yellows surprised in livid dawns, in those cobalt blues. chimerical.*

*Castañer is a painter with a lucid mind, a profound creator –supreme pictorial rule– of images and volumes, a passionate lyricist of color, a leading artist of a painting of culture, or what is the same, not uprooted. Despite her youth, who is indecisively entering her thirties, her work is already considerable. With exemplary tenacity, he has undertaken the most varied undertakings: portraiture, landscape, composition, the daring religious themes of his colossal paintings in the Parish of Santa María de Alcoy... And everything –color, shape, space, rhythm– with clear accent, with its own voice –an infinite distance from chameleonism and plagiarism–, that is, with personality.*

---

### **Newspaper "CIUDAD", Alcoy, April 12, 1960**

#### **Commentary by Rafael Coloma "Stained glass window in the sun", "El Cristo de Castañer"**

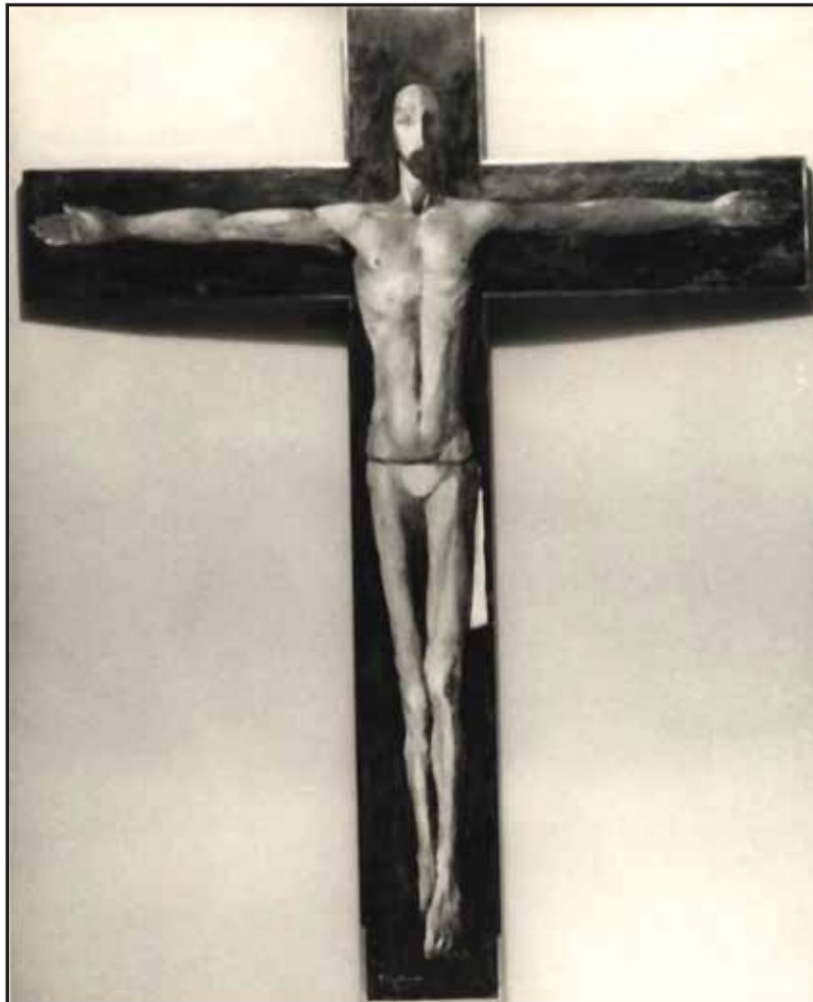
*As far as anyone knows, no artist from Alcoy –we are talking about painters– left us a Christ; not even Laporta – he painted Jesus in Marta's house – the one who did the most religious painting. It has been, then, Ramón Castañer, the first. What difficulties, reservations or respect does the image of Christ on the cross offer artists? Christ has been painted by the great painters; perhaps therein lies the greatest difficulty; the reparo –doubt– and the respect –consideration– are in Christ himself. One thing is necessary: to paint Christ the painter must be close to Christ; I don't say very close but just close. Castañer was commissioned a Christ and Castañer painted a Christ It already says a lot in favor of an artist who accepts a commission like this; that that nobody knows himself is not true; When Castañer accepted, he knew he had enough strength –brain and heart– to paint a Christ. But Castañer had to paint his Christ. Castañer's Christ is on the cross; it is on the cross; His hands and feet do not have nails, nor does an interweaving of spikes crown his head.*

*The dead body of Christ presents the arms open, so open –ready to embrace everyone: those who recognize him and those who spit on him (Castañer's central idea)– that they form two great right angles with the vertical of the body .*

*I ask: is Castañer's Christ really dead on the cross? I would rather say that he is risen on the cross; On the same stakes to which his crazed countrymen nailed him, Christ appears hieratic, as if nothing they did to him – flagellation, crucifixion – had been done to him. Preserves the deceased color of*

*dead flesh – oh manes of gray and blue wisely administered! – and remains there, on the cross, perpetually corpse, waiting for the last man on earth to arrive to unleash his arms and then transfigure himself, in full view of all, in a wide, ecumenical and saving embrace. Castañer has not painted a Christ that moves compassion – his Christ does not have a wound or a single drop of blood – but rather meditation; compassion is felt for those who are inferior to us –this is not the case of Christ–; meditation, on the other hand, leads us to recognize our smallness and misery – this is the case with all mortals. Castañer has painted a Christ that invites us to remain silent; that silence that they have every Good Friday, which reveals that Christ really expired on the cross; that Christ is still dead on the cross, awaiting an affirmative response to the plea –<forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing>– that, for all of us, nailed to the tree, he sent to the Father. Here is the Christ of Castañer.*

*Why does the name of the painters who painted the crucified follow that of Christ?  
The Christ of Velázquez, the Christ of Zurbarán, the Christ of Dalí, and – why not? – the Christ of Castañer.*



*Forbidden Christ, 1959, 2.00 x 1.50 m*

---

**“South” Art Gallery Exhibition, 1960, Santander  
Presentation José Simón Cabarga**

*I know the history of this artist from Alcoy. Alcoyano for reasons of birth and, therefore, affective. Universal for its aesthetic concept. Those desires for regional pigeonholes, for hermetically closed schools in which the artist locked himself up to certain postulates, have been out of date for a long time. And if in Spain these limitations have operated for many decades, the so-called "Levantine school" presupposed the total mortgage of the most personal ambitions of aesthetic freedom, to "Sorollismo". Ramón Castañer is one of those completely liberated, because even though there may be a clear Levantine affiliation in his work, it is in terms of his permeability to new currents. But, first and foremost, he is a sensitive painter, something that has been tried to be postponed due to the tremendous intellectual nature of painting in use today. It means that form and color – an inseparable pairing of painting – are fortunately well matched in Castañer's work without concessions or bribes, from either of these two elements, for the underhanded betrayal that separates and ruins the perpetual marriage.*

*Shape and color, plasticity, deep classical knowledge of the technique; composition loose from so much squeezing; and a knowledge of what is done and how it is done; Finally, a well-regulated hierarchy in the work, which is another of the secrets of artistic creation; All of this is contained, with the most perfect harmony and balance, in Castañer's paintings, united by their very diversity of concept.*

*It is a joy to greet a painter who arrives with a baggage that is not cheap, but rather paint-paint. And that is why we salute this artist from Alicante and universal in this his first confrontation with Santander, where he will surely be received with the interest that his work has aroused in other venues where his prestige was supported.*

---

**Exhibition "Estil Gallery", March, 1963, Valencia  
Presentation Francisco Llácer Plá**

*Dear Ramón: I have had to stop, breathe and calm down, to come to my senses, to the surprise that a painter asks a musician to present his pictorial work. Admiration and faith oblige, and if I accept the commission it is only to do it from my point of view: the musical.*

*I have known you for a long time and I follow your work step by step, weighing the only thing I possess in order to judge it: my sensitivity. My pictorial knowledge is rudimentary, as a simple tutor of more or less intense dimensions. But you already know my position in art; I think that the recipient of both painting and music should not think about whether or not they understand <that>, what matters is the <discharge> they receive when facing a painting or a piece of music, with absolute good faith free of historical prejudices, sometimes more imposed by tradition, than assimilated by conviction. It is therefore interesting, more than the material expression that can be of a certain category, to carry within itself the clarity of*

*a personal and human task. I remember that on one occasion you told me that if you weren't a painter you would have liked to be a musician, a composer. Your painting of today was already there in germ. Implicit in this desire was your desire to free yourself from anecdotal forms in order to fly more poetically, more subtly towards deeper regions of the spirit, less trampled by painting. You needed a spiritual matter as ethereal as music, to knead it emotionally and return it in roaring or angelic states, by essence, by itself.*

*A testimonial is important when it is sincere. Well then, your testimony is your painting, because in it you are sincere. I like your work, because it is sincere, flat and logical, because you find in it contrapuntal masses fighting for space, because I find orchestral and juxtaposed treatments, because there are slight chiaroscuros, or short violent strokes, like ax blows. All of which leads us, if we have the necessary weighting to try to delve into your painting, to discover the stability of the form, which gives rest or stimulates, depending on the starting point, because you arrive at the goal normally.*

*You have to try to perceive in your painting, as in music, what is absent and wait for the suggestion that the work brings us. Your painting is full of this. And that's why I like it.*

*There is a great parallel in your work in the way you paint and in the way you compose, perhaps for this reason I feel attracted to your paintings.*

*I (very modestly) would advise everyone who contemplates your painting to think musically. Possibly they will get big and very pleasant surprises, if they try to <see-hear>.*

*I wish you great success and I hope these lines help someone understand you*

---

**Exhibition "Estil Gallery", November, 1966, Valencia  
Literary Page, in the newspaper "Ciudad" of Alcoy  
Ramón Castañer and his "Genesis", by Adrián Espí Valdés**

*Perhaps – I am not going to do without it – it has been the direct contact that I have had in recent months with the Miguelangelesque world of the Vatican Sistine, perhaps the deep respect and admiration that the writings of <Genesis> deserve me; I don't know which of the two reasons or if both at the same time, the fact is that when visiting the last exhibition of our countryman Ramón Castañer Segura, recently held at the "Galería Estil" in Valencia, his paintings, from the outset, have won me over by complete; His six works inspired by biblical passages have suggested a whole world to me.*

*Ramón Castañer is, without a doubt, the modern day painter from Alcoy. We say this convinced of its veracity, at the same time that we regret that Castañer so occasionally shows up in his native city showing his work. Their professional tasks are guilty of this and, due to the convincing nature of this reason, we are not going here and now to expand.*

*The collection of oil paintings that our painter has exhibited in Valencia –a total of twenty-two– is heterogeneous, with different themes. Six paintings related to passages from Genesis, rustic landscapes, compositions of various types and two Romanesque interpretations of Christ and the Virgin, respectively.*

*On this occasion we only have to gloss the first of the aforementioned series, whose suggestive titles, moreover, respond to: "There is light and there was light...", "There is a firmament...", "Make the earth sprout fruit trees ...", "There is in the*

*firmament of the heavens, sun, moon and stars...", "Let the waters boil with animals and birds fly over the earth...", "Let us make man in our image and likeness".*

*The Old Testament events, the creation process of the world and of what is and exists in it, acquire in Castañer's palette a consistency and solidity, a physical and vital tangency, an internal dynamism and a rare corporeity. His first painting, with which the catalog begins, <Haya luz...>, constitutes a deep study of relief painting of geometric elements, with a restricted palette based on blacks and whites and the new tones resulting from the union of both. From among some circles, some waves of darkness, the face of the Creator emerges, vigorous, his features strong, his gaze deep. The cosmos, with Him, begins to have a reason for being. <Haya firmamento...> presents us with a Castañer paying homage to color, with a chromatic world –said El Chavarri– <made profusion and mixture>. The stars, all the systems and galaxies, the sun and the moon in their full roundness, the rainbow a true kaleidoscope of light and color. A truly emotional message. The third picture, when God creates the trees that are to bear fruit and be clothed in green, constitutes a turning point within his own genetic series. It is a desolate landscape, still orphaned by vegetal joy, although the first green and fresh buds are already appearing on the trunks. Never has so much simplicity or restriction produced – and we are referring to in recent times – such plastic beauty, so much elegance. The capable and deep brushstroke –as capable and profound was the work of the Creator–, the compositional sense, also bring us closer to those landscapes that we have seen reproduced by Pedro Breughel on occasion.*

*The moment in which the sun, moon and stars appear in the sky is conceived by the painter through an ideal eclipse. A fiery sun floods everything, obeying the Michelangelo hand of God that appears in the darkness. Light made, heaven and earth conceived, God had to create the animals on the face of the world, and the fish in the depths of the seas. Castañer <recreates> this phase of the beginning of the world. A border of white doves in the upper part of the painting and a beam of colored fish –luminous, even– coming to life, in their clumsiness and whirlwind of the first seconds, make this canvas by Castañer a composition full of joyful color And beauty.*

*And... the world already completed, with sun and stars, fish and animals, plants, trees and flowers on it, God needed to finish off his work by placing within it the creature that would have to govern his immeasurable work. <Let us make man in our image and likeness>, man –who will not be a mere animal– who will have part of God for having spirit and intelligence. Here, again the memory of the frescoed ceilings of the Sistine. The almighty hand of God touching the sleepy hand of Adam. Castañer resolves this passage by conceiving heads full of virility, chiseled with a chisel rather than caressed by the brush. The man in his pure and spotless nudity, and his female companion, a worthy finale to an entire creation process.*

*Ramón Castañer has convinced and has convinced us. His painting has touch, strength, expression, an aesthetic content, nerve and marrow. He knows how to paste, draw, give color, set his figures, his motifs, with atmosphere. In each of his paintings the three dimensions exist, palpable.*

---

**Exhibition "San Vicente Galleries", February, 1969, Valencia**  
**Presentation by Felipe Vicente Garín, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts**

*I met Ramón as a partner in the not easy task of teaching art. While I was theorizing about history and art, he was dealing with the complex world of color and shapes. His sincere character, with a frank and open mentality and very much in the reality of things, made him a good friend from the beginning.*

*Very well formed and with extensive gifts, it seemed that even his most improvised drawings or the most inconsequential notes had that "I don't know what" clearly indicating that the wisdom of a born painter runs inside.*

*If any sample or individualized exhibition of an artist is already a hard test, due to the number and the necessary quality required in the pieces to be shown publicly. In Castañer this is even more qualified because he is one of those people with tenacity who knows how to arrange teaching hours, with total dedication to his studio, working, painting, "enjoying" that, yes, to try to plastically capture those things that the artist always have to say.*

*The Valencian region –and within it Alcoy, specifically, of which Castañer is the son– have always been, and it is already cliché to say it, a fertile land of artists, (suffice it to remind us of the aforementioned Alicante city, Emilio Sala, Plácido Francés, Antonio Gisbert, and many others, not for little known, less important.) In the specific case of Ramón, he remains faithful to that realistic spirit and lover of the concrete that is so often part of the character of our people, and continues in his painting the figurative vein, renewing it, and poeticizing, updating, we could almost say, sublimating those "pots" and objects that are part of life, that are around us in the daily world, and that by dint of seeing them and even sometimes After using them, we almost always forget that although it is true that they are useful, they can also be beautiful...*

---

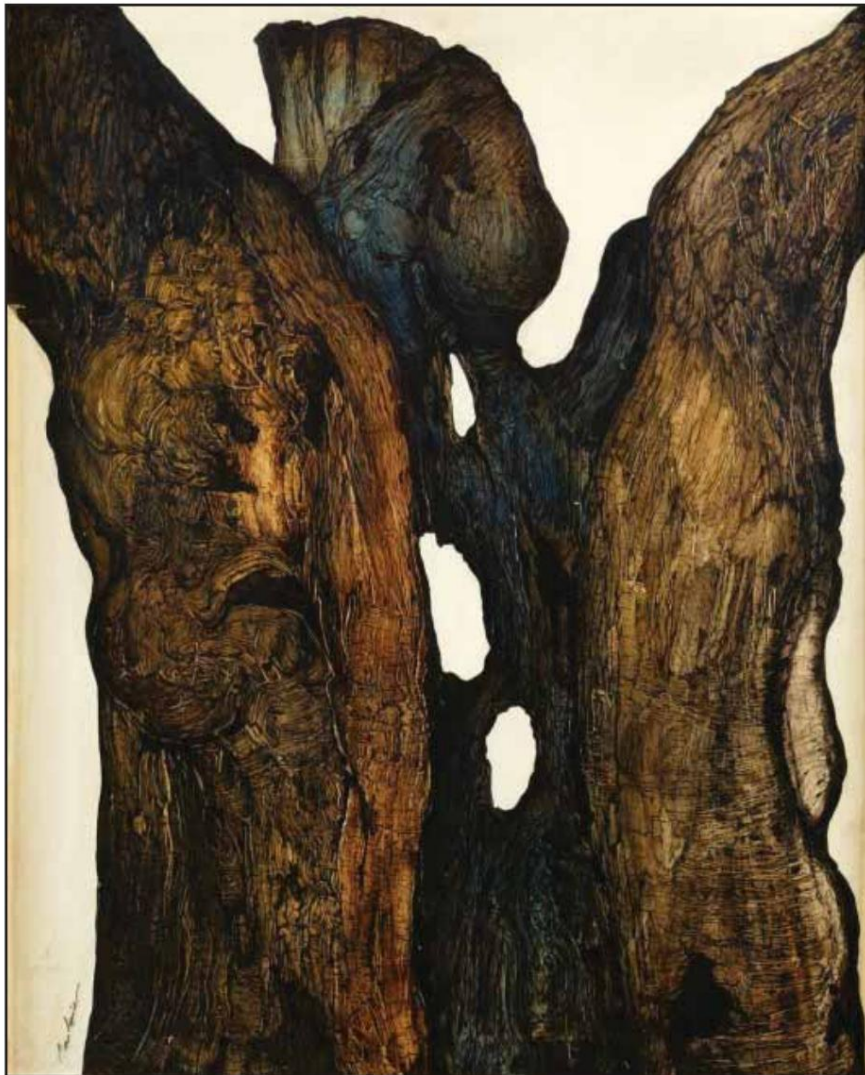
**"LEVANTE" newspaper, February 1971,**  
**Valencia "Glossary". "Humility and art" –Chanzá–**

*Ramón Castañer is a magnificent Valencian painter, from Alcoy by birth, who has just won, in recent oppositions, a chair of drawing in Madrid. Now, before weighing anchor at home, he presents an exhibition of oil paintings and "gouaches" in the Sorolla Hall of Galerías San Vicente, which critics have picked up in all their value, qualifying the theme of habitual and domestic objects, art that transfigures them. The humility of the painted objects, such as the sewing machine, the iron, the peppers, the chair, the onions, the frying pan, etc., are as if redeemed from the slavery of their destiny or their use, by dressing in finery of art, which Ramón Castañer wisely and lovingly gives them, with the magic wand of his brushes.*

*I know this artist who won the Autumn Salon Award years ago in Valencia, and even knowing that his mastery of techniques and his taste allow him to masterfully create a pencil drawing or a large mural, as he has done ; Knowing his simple spirit, not servile, I better understand this magnificent exhibition. For this reason, the artist has identified himself with the words of the writer Bertolt Brecht, when he writes: Of all the*

*objects, the ones I love the most are the used ones. Impregnated with the use of many, often transformed, they have perfected their forms and have become precious, because they have been appreciated many times.*

*Restless, creative, artist, he always exposes experiences, with mastery of his trade and, above all, sticking his soul to the work, putting love, which is noticeable. Because in these objects for home, family use, which he is now exhibiting, a charismatic light can be seen, which turns the rags of humble things into purples of triumph. Even the blackthorn of the hanging pans has a halo of the fire from which they have just emerged. Everything has, even dried flowers, like an attitude of calling for critical judgment, like waking up from a dream of greatness... But for many it has gone unnoticed.*



*"Sighing for naked air of hate." 1973; 100 x 81cm.*

**Exhibition, "HÉLLER GALLERY", February, 1973, Madrid  
Presentation of Rodrigo Rubio**

*Ramón Castañer's pictorial work has been looking for a position of honor for years. Castañer's work grows and widens slowly and steadily. The painter tries to find an expression according to his own palpitations: the painter walks on one path and another, on one sidewalk and another, maturing with each step, becoming more himself at each moment, at the same time that he makes and stands up. his pictorial work.*

*From that expression of his abstract images always covered by a strong color, which I saw in his paintings from a few years ago, to this symbolic micro-realism, there is a long time of maturity and work. The paintings that he has brought to this room today are like the summary of a search, of a continuous challenge with expressive forms. In other stages of his, I have seen a figurative painting; but always starting from a recreation, from a deep and long process to make a symbol of reality. In these trunks, in these fragments of trunks, which seem chiseled rather than painted, Castañer takes us, from the minuscule part of a reality, shapes of the trunks, knots and bare branches of those trunks, to the depth of the poetic and symbolic. Each trunk, each roughness of the bark, each twisted member of those trunks, tells us about a plant full of old age, a plant that had life and seems to be hovering around death. But in each of these forms, worked in such detail, there is like a scream, like a connection with the world of men, with the real but also the phantasmagorical and dream world of men.*

*For those who see Castañer's painting for the first time, these paintings may come as a great surprise, since they contain symbolic search and findings; For those of us who have followed the career of this great painter for a long time, the paintings we see today come to tell us that the artist is not, nor can he be, the man with a happy arm who marks strokes waiting for the pictorial flute to sound by chance. . In Castañer, the findings and achievements respond to a total delivery in search of an ambitious and sincere expression.*

---

**"Literary Mail", February 1973  
Castañer at the Héller Gallery, Rosa María de Lahidalga**

*The trees, and the emptiness that surrounds them, write a tragic poem on the canvas. Ramón Castañer presents in this exhibition at the Héller Gallery a series of symbolic portraits, made of a rough trunk, expressive humanity of feeling. Solitary trees, that in the naked prolongation of their roots, speak of dreams and anguish in the soul.*

*Energetic lines, in Castañer's work the material is a tenuous veil, or almost tactile relief in the tormented curve of intimate nooks. Bronco and contrasting colour, in a range of blacks, ochres and blues, the abyss is suggested in these paintings by surfaces of a hurtful white on which the tortuous forms of trees are inscribed. "You are beautiful as stone." "Tonight many children will be born." "You have to cry or you have to laugh breaking down." "Have you noticed how cold they are?" These and others are the titles that, as the author indicates, correspond to*



*poems by Aleixandre y Celaya, by Carmen Conde, by J. Ramón Jiménez, by José Hierro, Gloria Fuertes and other writers, poems made here, plastic expression and pictorial poetry.*

*Only one of the exhibited works is a portrait of an old woman, mother of trees perhaps, her hands and face wrinkled by time, where still eyes contemplate life. On this canvas, a broken light of tenderness and some bright red apples, almost corporeal, offer the contrast of thriving life, which aggressively and poetically fuses the beginning with the end of life.*

---

**Exhibition "Capitol Art Gallery", March, 1974, Alcoy  
Presentation, Antonio Arostegui**

*Today it is very common, in aesthetic circles, to escape from daily life, from the things and people with whom men live their daily lives, including artists. It seems as if the aesthetic possibilities of everyday life had been exhausted, as if the artistic task consisted of escaping from it to look for new worlds, new materials, new forms. On many occasions, this evasion is easier and more*

*comfortable than facing it, without stealing the body, with the reality that surrounds you, because in it and about it there is still much to see and say. And this is the way –  
tremendously difficult in its simplicity– that Ramón Castañer has traced to his painting.*

*In the theme of his works, he manifests himself as just another man from the street, who lives in this world that we all live in; in their refined execution, beats this powerful alchemy that knows how to transmute reality into aesthetic values, that knows how to elevate humble things to the level of an artistic category: a plate, a vase, a piece of furniture or a flower. And what happens in these paintings by Castañer happens so often in everyday life, that an object goes unnoticed over and over again, by dint of seeing it and living with it. Until suddenly it stands out spirited, defiant, deeply significant, before a provoked emptiness that Ramón Castañer symbolizes in the disturbing whiteness of its backgrounds.*

*Castañer's aesthetic struggle with everyday things translates into surprising results. With his creative intuition, with his undeniable trade as a painter, he forces and violates everyday life until he gets it to give up its hidden and deep secrets. Thus, for example, the ceramics reveal their noble condition of servitude to man; the trees –eaten or vigorous–, the inexhaustible cosmic power of nature; a figure of a withered woman, that tragedy of human life consumed in the thousand and one details of daily life, and that Ramón reflects in his paintings with a meticulousness that constitutes the unequivocal patent of his greatness.*

---

**“Literary Estafeta”, March, 1976, “Athenaeum” Exhibition, Madrid  
“The Azorinian Beauties of Ramón Castañer, by Luis López Anglada**

*Ramón Castañer likes to title his paintings with fragments of poems. From Machado to Ángel García López, poets lend the artist ideas and inspiration. All he has to do is translate into an image, give color to the verses, convert what had previously been the reason for essential words into plastic motifs.*

*Ramón Castañer's love for poetry is nothing new. His eyes were filled with Mediterranean light back in his Valencian lands, and what he brought to the canvas, his wife, Pepa de Castañer, made vibrate with her ringing and passionate voice. Thus, a married couple of artists has served for the verses to find in their home that integration of the arts that we have dreamed of for so long.*

*That is why the reader should not be surprised that we rush to point out the poetic meaning of this painting, a meaning that the painter accentuates with the verses that serve as the title.*

*If we were to continue looking for literary affinities for this painting, we would have no choice but to identify it, with that movement so in vogue in recent years that has sought to bring closer to the eternal themes of poetry –death, love, etc.– those others that daily life made enter through the eyes of the poet. The poetry of the everyday has been in fashion and is still the fundamental concern of many poets, who prefer to talk about those humble daily activities –housework, vulgar trifles that, however, sometimes reach the category of protagonists– better to dedicate their numen to solemn and transcendent singing. And so too Ramón Castañer has turned his eyes to humble household objects, chairs from rural dwellings, porcelain inherited from old tableware, bundles of clothes prepared for an excursion to the capital. All this seen with the eyes of a poet, with infinite love for the things that accompany life, with Azorinian care that likes to name each object, to find the appropriate meaning for it, to accentuate what is beautiful in what surrounds us. And to achieve this effect of making the humble transcend to areas of higher consideration, Ramón Castañer isolates the objects by painting a completely white background in his paintings. It is as if he wanted to make us understand that there is nothing more important to him than the simple object, his humble existence, his solitude in the midst of life. And with authentic draftsman's mastery, he accentuates a corner or a cornice that we guess exclusively by its consequence in the painted object.*

*This whiteness of funds, or rather this absence of funds, somewhat disconcerts the naive visitor to his exhibitions, who at first believes that they are facing an unfinished work until repeating the procedure leads them to realize the decided purpose of the painter of exalt not only the presence of the object, but also its social sense. At least that is how the illustrious Antonio Aróstegui explains it, very accurately, in an apology for the painter.*

*Realistic painting, but not in the usual way of practically photographing the model, but instead gives us a masterful and personal version of things. Ramón Castañer, a drawing teacher with an authentic vocation towards didactics –which is nothing more than to convey to the student his own passion for art– totally dominates the trade, the humble and majestic trade of the creator. In addition to his perfection as a draftsman, he combines his exquisite sensitivity to shade color in a balanced and harmonious composition. Above all, he likes to recreate himself in plastic problems that lead him to achieve the opacity of a porcelain in which we discover his love for the old testimonies of life or the painted gold of a frame or the pale sensation of peasant bread in the basket. Thus, by dint of the lightness of the brushstroke, the shading of colors, the very discreet use of matter over a finished initial drawing, Castañer gradually transforms the exhibition of reality into magic, into a message of poetic expression his eagerness to communicate the presence of the objects in your life.*

*And Rodrigo Rubio –another lover of everyday peasant circumstances– says, “in each of these forms, so detailed, there is like a cry, like a connection with the world of men, with the real world”.*

*Can you guess in Ramón Castañer the Levantine painter? If by this qualification we are going to look for the one who -following the tremendous example that, for many generations, Sorolla's impressionism dictated- only identifies with the levantinism of the seascapes, of the bleaching sun, of the nudes on the sand, undoubtedly the presence of these household, domestic, everyday utensils in painting will disappoint you. But whoever delves a little deeper into the culture of the Spanish Levante and knows that on this picturesque of beaches and shacks, there is an eagerness to exalt what constitutes the very life of the towns. The one that Azorín investigated through his constant contemplation of homes and towns; the one that Gabriel Miró developed in his luminous interpretation of lives and people; the one that Miguel Hernández left behind with a heavy heart, enjoying the smell of the house and the street, of the mountains and the ravine. Then you have to recognize the legitimate Levantine lineage of this painter, who raises in each painting a monument to the fleeting instant, to the stillness of what will disappear in a short time, to the testimony of what people leave behind as they pass through this valley of tears. It is as if we were listening to Quevedo's immortal verse: "What was firm has passed and only / what is fugitive remains and lasts".*

*The unbalanced chair, the bag of pomegranates just brought from the market, the last remaining plate of the family tableware. And there is an intense emotion of life in these paintings without the need for the painter to draw us the portrait of the owners of each house. Perhaps his wife, Pepa, is whispering in his ear the immortal verses: How life goes by! How does death come so quietly!*

*Painting of transcendent emotion that a drawing teacher leaves on each canvas, with humility, but with the passion of a lover of art, of a lover of life, of a lover of his people and his things that, by dint of making him look at them so much It turns out that one fine day, he finds that he is longing to see God through all that is beautiful and humble.*

---

**Exhibition "Sala del Prado" of the Ateneo de Madrid, February 10, 1976  
Presentation of Antonio Aróstegui**

*The work of Ramón Castañer constitutes a strange phenomenon, one of those few exceptions in the current artistic panorama, characterized by an insatiable desire for notoriety, by the creative rush, by the constant changes that the aesthetic mentality registers. Generally, artists today share one or of these three characteristics. Almost all of them work hastily, as if driven by the hectic rhythm that presides over so many orders of contemporary life. A typical example is that of Mathieu, who transfers the color directly from the tube to the canvas, preparing an exhibition in one night.*

*The incessant change is clearly evident in the proliferation of trends, in the endless search for new procedures, new materials, new expressive forms. And through these changes – who doubts it! The desire for notoriety often beats among those who see no other way to excel artistically than to try novelties and paths that are not always happy, not always aesthetically categorizable and valuable.*

*If to this we add so many attempts to excel in art using means foreign to art itself - the problem, the message, the communication, the code and*

*other etceteras—, one notices how much mystification, how much falsehood, how much careerism is sheltered today behind what has been and should be sincerity and authenticity in artistic work. And this is precisely where the image of Ramón Castañer is outlined as the of a man who fights the artistic combat cleanly, without foils or tricks, without stealing his body from the aesthetic challenge of the reality that is there, present to all of us, offering us all its possibilities of artistic translation. Because Ramón Castañer is the negation of all those characteristics that contribute so much and have contributed to confuse and confuse the current panorama of the arts.*

*His work never reflects that itch for aesthetic change, nor the creative haste, nor any desire for notoriety. Only the noble impulse—in his humility and in his greatness—to be a painter, a good painter. And therein lies the artistic importance of Ramón Castañer, in that without resorting to those often false procedures, he has managed to clearly define himself in the field of painting, conquer a personality*

\* \* \* \*

*With the above it is almost said that Ramón Castañer is a figurative artist. But, despite the fact that they faithfully reflect objective reality, his paintings are at an infinite distance from photographic reproduction. Because Ramón Castañer does not reproduce the objects or people he paints, but instead recreates them, giving them the indelible and unmistakable stamp of his own personality. Castañer's figuration thus achieves the prodigy of an aesthetic alchemy that allows him, while maintaining maximum fidelity to the object, to express himself in his own subjective, personal and unique way. At the same time, the object recreated in the paintings is and is not the same object that exists in reality, because now on the canvas it is impregnated with the artist's sensitivity, enthusiasm, and creative passion. In that humility with which he submits to the object, recreating it with all its hairs and marks, Castañer has found the path to his artistic greatness, the most appropriate way to personalize himself artistically.*

*That meticulousness, that detail with which Ramón captures the object in his paintings also has a high indicative value. It reveals an undeniable mastery of the trade, an incorruptible aesthetic vocation, honesty and authenticity that are surprising today. There is in Castañer's canvases a dedication, an artistic slowness, a love for a job well done, which constitute an exemplary attitude in the face of the maelstrom that oppresses contemporary artistic production.*

*Although apart from the "isms", he does not remain oblivious to the current conquests when they can contribute to enrich his work. With Mondrian, for example, Ramón Castañer captures the highly significant and expressive value of white, which he inevitably incorporates into his canvases. And that white field not only allows you to cut out and define the objects, but also to highlight them, exalt them, solidly anchor them in a void that gives them balance, consistency and power at the same time.*

*On their white backgrounds, all those objects—so often humble and insignificant in themselves—acquire an emotional vibration that springs from aesthetic sentiment. Because that is what the true function of art consists in, the ability to*

*arouse by itself the aesthetic emotion. Art deserts its primary function in the opposite case, when it tries to achieve that emotion by other means, resorting to mechanical-physiological sensations -dislocation of forms, screams of color-, or transferring emotional excitement to the subject, as happened in those paintings. of "a mal Cristo mucha sangre", or with those primitive posters of the "comic" that proclaimed the crime of Cuenca in squares and streets.*

*Ramón Castañer is a tremendously current painter. His works do not show an academic imprint, not even a brief nostalgia for the pictorial past. Furthermore, I believe that they are open to the future if it is understood as a future of universal understanding and comprehension. Because this fidelity to figuration roots the possibility that his work can be universally understood.*

*Ramón Castañer does not paint for a social group, for a sector or a class, but so that, indiscriminately, all men can understand and feel it.*

*If now one attends to what Castañer recreates, to the theme, the aesthetic presence of everyday life is immediately noticeable in his work. But this is no longer, as Haeidger thought, a sign of authenticity, the distortion of human destiny. Suddenly, in Castañer's paintings, those thousand and one objects –ignored for living with them daily– rise up like a cry, like a spur, also like the longing for a sleeping memory. And then they become a revelation and dignify our own daily life. Because in them we find ourselves, they are imposed on us as the instruments with which we fight our daily struggle, which we use to fulfill our own destiny, to fulfill ourselves.*

*With very rare and few exceptions, the daily life that Ramón Castañer's work includes is the daily life of the people. Ordinary belongings and objects that can be found in the suburban shack, in the village shack or in the country farmhouse, a key or a jug, a chair, a cage or a bottle, or a shawl that is equally a garment coat and traveling bundle. That is why this exaltation of everyday objects implies an aesthetic exaltation of the people themselves, with the explicit recognition of their dignity and the firm manifestation of the respect that is due to them. Without those suspicious boasts that so often try to turn aesthetic expression into a demagogic cry, Ramón Castañer is an artist who truly lives and feels popular life; and from that experience, from that feeling, springs in his work the aesthetic presence of the people, their way of being, of living, of suffering.*

*But not only the objects that the people use, but also the people themselves are present in their work. Men and women who have burned their lives in the heroism of everyday life, furrowed by the rough sign of the times, indelibly marked by the burden of living a difficult life, tenaciously maintained and defended with a desire for survival and redemption. Men and women of the town who there, in the paintings, rise to the level of the aesthetic category, constituting with their presence –mute and eloquent at the same time– a reproach, an encouragement and a hope of justice to be fulfilled. Like Miguel Hernández, the winds of the town drag Ramón Castañer.*

---

**“Literary Estafeta”, 1976, Madrid Exhibition “Athenaeum”**

**"The painting of Ramón Castañer."**

**"Testimony of man and his environment" by Rosa Martínez de Lahidalga**

*Along the rural paths of Castilla and Levante, the peasant man pays tribute to the life of bread, sweat and fatigue. These rude men and women with black kerchiefs on their heads carry engraved on their faces the groove of work, of the burning suns and of the winter cold. They are faces for a human geography of the earth, with its harvest of hope, joy and mourning.*

*Ramón Castañer, born in Alcoy and based for years in Madrid, where he has developed a large part of his pictorial career. He brings his personal poetic vision to this reality, thanks to a plastic art in which he combines the objective recreation of shapes with the lucidity of color, a transcript of the feeling that vivifies what he contemplates. Castañer is a painter of reality. His work testifies to simple people, his environment and even the objects that are of daily use, revealing a costumbrismo that he has put aside to become a conceptual essence and a strict pictorial exercise not devoid of emotional values.*

*On the whitewashed walls a set of artisan keys is arranged; a wicker chair supports the bundle with food that will lighten the day in the field; or a net that wraps fruits of an exuberant orange and green, it becomes an allegory of the earth in season. Its well-defined drawing responds to a clarified and intellectualized definition of the volumes. The drawing is superimposed here by the virtuosity of a line that outlines contours and affects folds and recesses. But this precision, which could emulate a camera lens, appears intentionally transcended by the intense expressiveness of color. From its figures in black to the luminous whites of its walls; from ochres and bronzes to intense yellows, greens or tempered reds, light appears closely identified with color, offering contrasts that range from light blindness to chiaroscuro and penumbra.*

*Castañer likes flat perspective, so that each of his works is offered as the finished fragment of a world that is difficult to penetrate.*

*In his painting, he flees from all subjective lucubration regarding the form. It happens, however, that if his drawing has been captivated, according to the classical concept, by definition and fixity, with that same desire for rigor, color manifests itself, fixed at the moment of greatest expressive transcendence.*

*Throughout his pictorial evolution, the artist has cultivated from an academic figuration to an expressionist neofiguration, and in his current stage, a neorealism with a neodadaist nuance. Even though Castañer, in his work is not limited to the simple and plain presentation of raw objects, and in any case reveals their potential emotional expressiveness. Regarding the treatment of the matter, he has sometimes used the contrasts of thickening, smoothness and eroding of the same, as well as the glazing in deaf layers. In his recent work, the pictorial material appears turned into a very thin layer that supports the virtuosity of the drawing and the expressiveness of the color, elements that accredit and define the plastic purism of a harmonious and subtly balanced composition.*

---

**Press commentary, "Levante", April, 1976, Valencia  
"Painting of today and always", Rodrigo Rubio**

*No one doubts that we are living in a moment of great momentum for Spanish painting. Those who noted qualities and good manners in the forties (when Eugenio D'Ors invented that so interesting thing about the Salón de los Once), are today established teachers. Then other painters have come. Difficult for some to make their way, make a name, get listed. But Spanish painting was getting rich little by little, and it is that same painting that has led to the appearance of a good number of valuable brushes over the course of three decades. Because that painting, so differentiated in tendencies and styles, had, in a certain way, a connection with the great tradition of our pictorial art of all time.*

*Thus, the avant-garde, the abstract, those who assimilated foreign techniques (those who are said to be or belong to the School of Paris) have had an echo. And, likewise, independent painters, free painters, not subject to ism, have grown. some, or not, at least, committed to certain isms or schools.*

*Now when perhaps everything has been rehearsed a thousand times, we are talking about the great moment of figurative painting. The real painting, the one that goes beyond the stain, the insinuation. The most detailed realism is valued, the suggestive landscape is valued, but also the one that leads us to the realization of things.*

*I don't know, now, what the critics, those who understand, will be able to say about an exhibition, frankly surprising, that I have seen in the Madrid Ateneo (Prado room). I don't know what they will say. I'm also not going to worry too much if they say this or that. I think that the exhibition to which I refer (the paintings of Ramón Castañer) deserve a serious comment.*

*Ramón Castañer, who also at some point approached the avant-garde of the abstract, has been painting for some time with his back turned to any influence. I have seen him paint in his studio, from the rough bark of the old trunks to that iron or that old sewing machine that we can see, as if stamped –almost in relief– on the white canvas. I have seen him paint in an incredible way, staying hours, days, weeks, next to a painting, because that painting required effort, hard work, and, above all, an artistic vocation. Hence, when it comes to exhibiting – very occasionally, at least in Madrid – Castañer brings a well-done work to art galleries, a painting of realities, but at the same time poetic and symbolic.*

*There is a screaming expression, strong verse, in that bundle, gathered up with a handkerchief that rests on a chair, there is like an aftertaste for lost worlds, in that plasticity of shelves full of jars, dishes, tureen, plates, etc. There is a poetic, delicate trembling in the earthenware vase on the table, where, as if careless, a letter -an envelope- also appears with paper already yellowed from old age...*

*Realism, but poetry and symbolism. At the same time, reaching very old roots, well, I see in Castañer's detail – painter of patience, painter of calm – an approximation to Moorish mini-art; to what seems embroidered to us – plaster wall, leather piece– by East African artist. In all of this, which can bring us closer to the real object, we see, however, the poetic expression, the symbolic voice and, above all, a serious, deep task, of a painter who traces his own artistic path with certainty.*

---

**Exhibition, "Estil Gallery", March, 1976, Valencia"**  
**Panorama of the Arts, "Levante", Carlos Sentí Esteve**

*There is no exaggeration in describing the "show" that the Alcoy-born painter Ramón Castañer presents at Galería Estil as extraordinary. Extraordinary in many ways.*

*We have followed the career of this artist for many years, and we perfectly remember the times when he enthusiastically joined what we could call the abstract revolution. Nothing is accidental in the work of a real painter. The links in the chain fit together perfectly, and if any are missing, we see them clearly. Rilke said: "He was a poet, he hated the imprecise." Ramón Castañer is also a poet who uses brushes instead of using a pen. Precision is one of the essential muses.*

*But after that time of asceticism, as far as human anecdote is concerned. After that time of pure virtuosity of color and invented form, without human anecdote, has come this very humane painting, which has not focused, like so many others, on hyperrealism, but on a traditional Spanish realism, which better serves the purpose of warmth and endearing appreciation of humble objects.*

*In some cases it has been based on a poem, or only a fragment of it: in others, the artist's wife, Pepa de Castañer, has put words to the images that are valued for their expressive capacity, with some verses by Machado, of Lorca, of Celaya or of some other great of our poetry.*

*As for pictorial wisdom, you cannot ask for more: Ramón Castañer manages all the springs of drawing and color like a true master. As for the artistic inspiration, we must warmly praise this painter who knows how to take us by the hand through the ins and outs of the poetry that encourages us in all things and that is suggested by hints, somewhat nuanced with surrealism of the most shoot objects.*

---

**March 13, 1977, "The Provinces"**  
**"Humanized Objects", by Mari Ángeles Arazo**

*The chair, the abandoned work, the glasses. A painting that suggests, like all those by Ramón Castañer, an endearing world of experiences. Always choose humanized objects –as Neruda said–; objects with so many traces that they are impregnated, one would say, with skin, with smell, with breath.*

*Next to the painting of the chair, the interrupted work and those graduated glasses, the verses of Anfós Ramón García are written.*

*"It is brochant with tears of verge those  
 llensols or touches of skin freda,  
 Guaitant joins kisses the capvespre  
 who bid from the street to the finestra"*





1977; 81 x 65cm

*And it is necessary to imagine the mature woman, who is still embroidering a trousseau destined to wither, while her body bristles from that rumor of caresses that reaches her from young lovers.*

*The charm of the canvases, of the handkerchiefs typical of the village bundle, of the decadent satins of a salon, of the Manila shawls; all fabrics; ancient or popular show an impeccable drawing, a total mastery of the brushstroke and the material; Above all, they demonstrate the sensitivity of someone who knows how to complement them with other elements that enclose an environment, from which a creature seems to have escaped; a being loaded with illusions, like the young woman on the pilgrimage, or the woman who gathered the herbs from Sierra Mariola. A man or a family, rather, who emigrate: there are the cheap suitcases, the bundles, the*

umbrella, in a corner of a village station; there is the decision and anguish of those who go in search of another wage, with a hope that barely flutters, with a shrunken heart.

I have seen Ramón Castañer paint in his studio in Madrid, a room full of books, fossils, holy water fonts, coins, ceramic miniatures; a study where the fans, the cups bought on the flea market, the Arab accessories that he owns as a good Alcoyano; everything has its own language, which he translates enriching it, by dint of having lived overcoming suffering and overcoming, day by day, the negative edges. An artist receiving feelings that throb in his art, parallel to some verses that Pepa de Castañer adds.

There are the humble houses with the clothes hanging in the sun; colored garments that reveal social status; trammel boats; the old woman with the "paraeta"; the sewing box of our mothers, when the stockings are mended by inserting a wooden egg... Who was the letter addressed to, who opened it so hastily?... Furniture is disassembled at home, like an autumn that anticipates an end?... Paintings and paintings by Castañer, in Galería Estil, that invite us to placidity, to nostalgia, to identify ourselves –with whom?– with a being who suffered and loved like any of us.

---

### **March 9, 1977, "Levante" Glossary "Loca garabía", S. Chanzá**

It is not the first time that he has done so, but we would like to point out as an unusual grace that the artist who is currently exhibiting at Estil, puts next to his paintings, a fragment of a poem, which judges and justifies all the magnificence of plastic. The painter is from Alcoy from head to toe, a descendant of those Moors who lost the last battle in "les filaes" in Alcoy, or who lose it every year between the roar of gunpowder and the miraculous and decisive silence of Saint George. . His name is Ramón Castañer.

The Valencian public knows him for his artistic manifestations, but he moved to Madrid a few years ago to occupy a chair he won in the town and court, and his visits to his beloved land, Valencia, are somewhat sporadic. That is why the success of the public of those who know of its quality, and the greetings of the many friends who are honored with it.

Well, Ramón's wife, Pepa, is also from Alcoy and a magnificent rhapsode, who has traveled the itinerary of many poems and knows a large anthology of them. This, Pepa de Castañer, is an enthusiastic collaborator of her husband, and puts this complement of plastic beauty into practice: a fragment of a poem that justifies the creation of the painting, or perhaps the poetic version that explains it. Thus, on a canvas, in an oil painting full of color and nuances, in which there are a series of things on a chair, objects of personal adornment from endearing folklore, next to the frame is written: "The joyous pilgrimage came to an end, and taking roads and trails, the happy crowd of pilgrims dispersed in the crazy merriment". And in another, where a young woman is preparing her future love with preparatory crafts, the dowry, it is said: "està brodant amb llàgrimes de verge, aquells llensols..."

It is the grace of opportunity, it is like the miraculous blow on "Moses", which is each painting by this artist, and when he is told to speak, he speaks and does so in verse!

**Mayte Muñoz Gallery Exhibition, November 1977, Barcelona**  
**"La Vanguardia", Francesc Galí**

*Starting from the absolute mastery that he has of drawing, with which he raises the skeletons of his works; the knowledge he has of composition, with which he manages to pose the themes masterfully; of his good brushwork and, still, of his taste for color that, the Valencian artist –resident in Madrid where he holds a chair of drawing– Ramón Castañer, has made the magnificent exhibition that he has hung in the Mayte Muñoz Art Gallery.*

*Sample for which its creator has searched and found an expression that, staying at its exact –realistic– point, reaches some poetic realities that are representative –at the same time as some images– of some ideas or inspirations.*

*Ideas or inspirations that he finds in a few fragments of poems –his own or originals by celebrated authors– that lead him to the expression of images that are born, most of the time, from the repetition of the daily thanks to a grasp of reality that, I think, it only becomes possible –in a work– when the painter has emptied, when carrying it out, his sensibility.*

*Thus, his works achieve –from their perfection and representative fidelity– that virtue so difficult to achieve for realistic painting: creating an atmosphere and a favorable poetic climate for their subjects.*

*And it is that when that happens –as it happens in the painting of Ramón Castañer– it is that, inevitably, it tells something true.*

---

**Exhibition "Capitol Gallery", March 1978, Alcoy**  
**"City", "The lyricism of a world that is extinguished, Ramón Castañer"**  
**Adrian Espi Valdes**

*Perhaps the person who has best understood the poetic and lyrical work of Ramón Castañer in recent times is another poet, López Anglada. We remember a beautiful article about his precious art a few years ago in the "Literary Gazette". As a result, we have followed in the footsteps of our painter through his latest exhibitions, and when Ramón Castañer arrives in our city –his native town– we are impressed by the living lesson of humanity, sincerity, poetics, and good painting.*

*Ramón Castañer Segura with a luminous realism that does not need other supports, reworks a world –that of his childhood– full of lyrical expressionism, according to canons of execution that are clean, painstaking, worked, without improvisations or loose ends. And in his paintings –splendidly made oil paintings– the memories of yesterday revive all the lyricism of a world that is extinguishing, and that with Proustian evocation he firmly evokes, without falling into the cliché or the softness of a sick nostalgia, but with enough specific weight to elevate each brushstroke, each line, each image and each memory present on the canvas to an unquestionable category.*

*Ramón Castañer, not a hyper-realist, but a pure realist, captures in his paintings those things or those scenes that seem to be leaving our world, that are retreating: the brazier with its chimney made from a tin cylinder; the loaf of homemade bread, crunchy and round as a sun; the bell*

*glass that preserves inside the family image, revered by each and every one of the members of the house; bobbin lace and the Dalmau encyclopedia; the stickers and the metal boxes –of drugs– that kept them; the wooden top; The lamp with carved glass lampshades...*

*How much human and plastic content we find in his work! Truth, sincerity and compositional brilliance. Ramón Castañer's oil paintings sing the small and intimate story of small things, but they sing it with greatness, with nerve, with life, with expressive force, exhibiting in each fragment, in each millimeter, all the experience, all the trade, all the author's technique, accumulated through a vocationally felt life and served with authentic passion, with evident enthusiasm.*

*Ramón Castañer with this exhibition, with which he has already celebrated in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid, has given us the true measure of his art. He has shown us naked, transmuting his soul on each and every one of the supports in which he has invested, with his inspiration, his good pictorial work, his skills as an observer, his spirit as a poet. Perhaps we do not get away from everything if we assert –and we do– that this plastic exhibition, the oil painting exhibition by Ramón Castañer, is the exhibition of the year in our city.*

---

**“Art Gallery 16”, March 1980, Madrid  
Presentation by Agustín Andreu Rodrigo.**

***INITIATION TO THINGS “...the  
poetry of things themselves” (G. Santayana).***

*The artists –those of the word and those of the brush– arrive before. Ramón Castañer arrived years ago by his foot to things. Dramatic chapter of Anthropology and History –of the intimate and the public– of man: things and their history.*

*These chairs and these chests of drawers, these table linens and these embroideries, these walls and these light switches, these four-cornered shawls in which worlds fit..., are part of the interior environment of the houses of towns in Alicante, Valencia... Everything is within, or from within. Ramón comes with his hands full of these things.*

*Re-memories, re-records they are, from the heart they sprout. They are not images that return, since they were no longer in anyone's eyes nor are they –almost– in the world, besides, the image never has so much. What returns through the heart and the conviction, is the element from which, through a patient, constant, absorbed, full work, things recover all their presence, all their being for man. They come from that world: When things were wonderful... in whose environment we found ourselves one day, or was surprised one day, by life.*

*Why are they coming back now?*

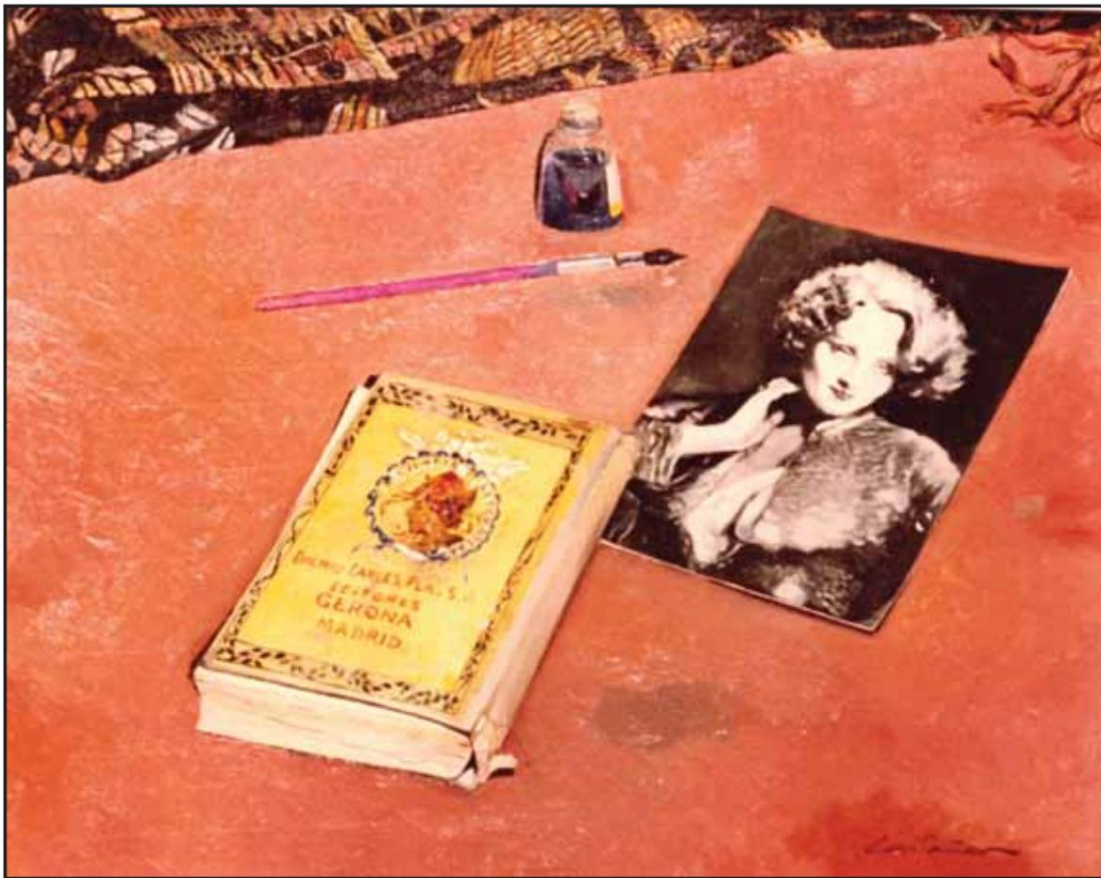
*These things so true, so things, so Mediterraneanly sacred. These things full of human presence: so man-made, so "manosetas", so impregnated with deep ancient smells, so made to the touch...  
(Tactus finis sensus).*

*Ramón would have to settle some accounts with himself, paying for mythical crimes of astonishment, with tacts, unstable perfumes: those sunny clothes, ironed to coal; those tablecloths in a restful chest... All that from before. But it's not enough. The poet, the painter, the worlds turned inside out. Things intensely claim their Leibnizian individuality, or their eternal concrete idea. If they claim it with that loving force and that obvious simplicity, it is because something essential to man, man, is in danger.*

*Ramón has looked at things, he has seen them, he has remembered those things so lived, so involved in life, singular and non-exchangeable, so appropriate and so full of human presence. Could it be that the world has filled us with things that are almost not things—and...?*

*One day, around the 3rd century, man lost touch and gave himself up to the glove, that radical distance. Could it happen that one day things will lose their tactile depth and become deaf to touch?*

*Look, men, look at them: when things were ordinary but sacred, and they fell close to the gods! With a religious trembling, this prophetic painting reminds us of it, which is all soul.*



1980; 55x46cm

**“VILLAGE”, February 27, 1980 Madrid “Art Gallery 16”  
“The Exhibitions” MA García Viñolas**

*Ramón Castañer is a full body painter. Let me explain: Castañer paints with integrity, without fainting, fully assuming reality, in the form of a piece and a body clean of evasions. His painting does not beat around the bush or waste contemplations in his relentless contemplation of reality. A robust and firm technique authorizes you to do so. Form and color are sincere with admirable courage.*

*But that sincerity is not aggressive, but incorruptible to the rigor of what he has seen.*

*When Castañer's painting inhabited a plant kingdom of strong felled trees a few years ago, I said of it that it was painting that did not go by the branches, but by the trunks. And this was not just a diagnosis by sight, but in the awareness that it was based on the firm ground of the art of painting for good, more attentive to consistency than to the adornment of forms. His world of images is not something from another world, but from this one, the world we inhabit, the daily image, the one that life puts before our eyes and that the painter faces without blinking. It is the pure truth of things. The painter has slapped the mystery with all its evasive consequences and then has put that hand, his wise and strong hand, to work. His realism is not precious, but dense, kneading a clean body of color. And I must say that this courage, this courage of forms and colors, is aware of its reason for being and not a temperamental outburst of occasion. And that the expressive force is accompanied here by that tenderness that sensitivity provides so that the image is vigorous and kind at the same time*

---

**Town, February 1980, Madrid "Art Gallery 16"  
"Art Chronicle", Mario Antolín**

*A strange tenderness permeates the realistic oil paintings of Ramón Castañer. A Levantine painter, delicate and sensitive, who recreates the soul of things on canvas. His world is charged with silences, with lyrical intimacies, with distant presences, as if Castañer – struggling with time – wanted to retain the trace of the past in the present. His themes are humble, fragile and simple; antique silk and lace cushions, porcelain that screams the taste of yesterday, old chairs covered in colored fabrics, wicker baskets, cards fed up with playing mus, out-of-fashion figurines, iron keys hanging on the wall... there are pieces of life sleeping in each object and names and memories that color disguises. A sweet warmth translates from the canvas that the artist has painted with patient tenderness.*

*Paint worked, warm and colorful. Surprising mastery of the art of drawing. Insistent and delicate brushstroke. Wide palette with the entire color alphabet.*

*An elastic game of space. Varied and determined composition and a mysterious charm, which distances the perfection achieved from the cold beauty of hyper-realism, are outstanding notes of the creative work of Ramón Castañer.*

---

---

**“GOYA” Art Magazine, No. 155, March-April, 1980 “Art Gallery 16”**

**“Art in Madrid”, Luis Figuerola-Ferretti**

*"Around the new realism". Good signs that the old naturalism of the 19th century in transit to ours, undaunted by the dawn of the new impressionist formulas of modernity, is not exhausted, it had not crossed its own border with determined intentions, this is confirmed by various samples coinciding in time. in four different rooms in Madrid. They have not been the only ones, nor perhaps the most connected with what this new pictorial concept wants to be, but they are useful for the case. And mentioning in the first place the painting by **R.***

***Castañer** is determined by his capitular character. Initial in everything that is connected with what was naturalism of reality, that is, precision and even preciousness of a drawing that reaches the meticulous neatness of the lace or the folds of an old hanging veil. And all this infused in an intense coloration, lively or harmonious if appropriate, in the composition as a whole. But the most characteristic of the realities that **Castañer** offers us lies in the luminous fullness that floods everything without leaving room for the gimmicky nimbus; everything is, and is, with the reality of a frontal light, and is sometimes with precision in the detail and isolation of some keys, some glasses next to some letters, some cloth on the chair as if to announce what can be, and it is not entirely yet, <<new realism>> in the morphological partiality of some things without greater mystery and suggestion beyond themselves. But, as I already said, it is the capitular, the account of what was naturalism yesterday and now it is offered to us as a concise and important reality. **Castañer** is thus the great artist of a noble trade.*

---

**Independent monthly magazine, March 1980 "Art Criticism"**

**"Gallery 16", "The things of Ramón Castañer", Julia Sáez-Angulo**

*Ramón Castañer recognizes the experiences of human life, next to and through the objects that he recreates and perpetuates plastically through his realistic painting, supported by a good drawing and a color penetrated by Mediterranean light. Veils, tablecloths, brocades and embroidery, flowers hidden in a lantern, mirrors, dolls and bullfighter's capes are not an innocuous pretext for Ramón Castañer's brush to bring color to the canvas. It is the pulsating human life that transfers to the canvases of this exquisite realist, who has a name of his own within pure realism.*

*Spanish. The color bursts forth after a precise and professorial drawing. Not a single detail of the object will be lost in Castañer's meticulous brushwork. Its striking realism breaks the first photographic impression due to the symbolist breath that the things – and some figures– that the painter has selected reflect, responding to a poetic imperative of his feelings.*

*Special mention should be made of the four "gouaches" that Castañer also presented in this Galería 16 exhibition, in which he collects "very watercoloured" landscapes of trees and two corners of Madrid. On this side, the artist could have a very interesting challenge. .*



1982; 100 x 81cm

**Exhibition at Galería “Zeta” in Valencia, June 1982  
“Levante”, commentary by C. SENTI.**

*We already knew everything about the mastery and grace of Ramón Castañer in the use of the elements that make up the great phenomenon of painting, for the expression and communication of aesthetic emotions. He has shown it time and time again, the same in figuration as in informalism; the same in the field of the abstract as in that of the clearly anecdotal and humanized.*

*The matter has no secrets for Castañer, who kneads it with loving neatness and makes it the best support for a fine color that sometimes borders on Fauvism and sometimes settles in the forts of a great and almost monastic austerity.*

*But, almost always, Castañer is leafy, and is full of evocations to transmit. He could have done the same composing verses as writing notes*



*on a pentagram and certainly that his painting participates in the word and the non-articulate son.*

*This exhibition, we want to warn, is made of great absences. Or, what is the same, of nostalgia. Some clothes on a chair bring us the memory of a first communion; another garment on another back will be a tribute to the opulence of Mae West and so on until a pile of dead leaves on a white tablecloth give us a strange feeling of park*

*absent.*

*A master of drawing, Castañer does what he wants with the objects presented to us by the harmonious combination of their colors. And through mists made of gauze, or with the sharpness of a direct vision, we find this world of nostalgia, which is a form of joy as Proust said, "In search of lost time."*

---

**Exhibition at the Caja de Ahorros de Alicante and Murcia, December 1987, Alcoy**

**Castañer, "40 years of painting", (1947 – 1987)  
"An accomplished teacher" Antonio Revert**

*A large volume could be written about Ramón Castañer, his extensive work does not fit in a single article. He is a painter of many resources and many tendencies. An artist of bright colors and perfect drawing. Of good portraits and illustrations; muralist, where they exist, and expressionist. Cubist in his own way and hyperrealist. And, in all these variations, he stands out as the consummate master.*

*As a Renaissance artist for his knowledge and his good work.*

*In this anthological exhibition that is now being presented to the Alcoy public, the viewer will have the opportunity to see part of his work; but not all. Their murals remain in the churches, which I invite you to visit: María Auxiliadora, La Parroquia de Santa María de Alcoy and El Salvador de Cocentaina. Dozens and dozens of square meters painted "in situ", on top of the scaffolding, with splendid achievements.*

*Let's also review the huge amount of illustrations that Castañer has been doing for the Fiesta. In the Casal, cartoons, drawings, oil paintings, watercolors and a long etc. are kept, like a precious treasure, extolling our Moors and Christians, in an incomparable plastic gallery. It is also worth noting, and in what way, his poster contribution, his designs for the squads and costumes, a prodigious retina to capture the great spring symphony of Alcoy, at the end of April.*

*This means that we are before an immense painter, before a prodigy of work and continuous inspiration, before a trajectory worthy of being told, before an altarpiece of hundreds of kilometers of good painting, refined by the years and the incessant work of an artist without pair.*

*Three pillars support the long execution of Ramón Castañer, which we exhaustively proclaim: his splendid drawing, solid foundation of all his work; the ornament of his color, lady-in-waiting for all his paintings; and a third, which we could split into two: his fantasy and his imitative genius, which together give the superior work, the work well done.*

*And it is that Ramón Castañer, as Ortega y Gasset would say, in short, has always had the objective of creating a new reality within the old reality.*



1980; 100 x 81cm

**Castañer, "40 years of painting", (1947 – 1987)  
"Castañer, muralist painter", Adrián Espí Valdés**

*Since the glorious years of Fernando Cabrera Cantó with his "mural" of the apse of San Jorge, the painters of Alcoy have not dealt with "decorating" the temples of the city. Another great artist who had attended to this facet was Francisco Laporta, at the beginning of the century, but religious art, painting in particular, had fallen - perhaps necessarily - into oblivion. In the 1950s, it was Ramón Castañer who accepted this commitment, taking on all the risks that this entailed, and fighting against time and, perhaps, against the incomprehension of a public -the parish church of Santa María- those storied canvases that he had started Arthur*

*Imélida, given that Castañer's language, new, dynamic, different, "updated" and very personal, seemed –and in fact was, somewhat– a different whole.*

*"We are before a beautiful pictorial work that consists of thirty-two life-size figures and that represent on its left side the baptism of San Pancracio by Pope San Marcelino", this is how Ana Maria began in the pages of the newspaper Información the description of the "mural" work – attached canvas – that Ramón Castañer had just completed for the church of María Auxiliadora. "Of the two scenes in the life of San Pancracio – added A. Miró in the weekly "City" – that of his baptism... is more accomplished in composition, balanced and natural, and in the verismo of the figures..."*

*And then, once the commitment has been passed, the litmus test. Another larger order came to Castañer: meters and square meters of canvas for the presbytery of the parish of Santa María, which had only been able to save the huge canvases by Joaquín Oliet from his extensive and rich collection of decorative paintings. The work program and the repertoire was extensive, even complex: on the ceiling, the Assumption of the Virgin – 54 square meters and 103 figures– painted all in planes, within a neo-cubist concept based on pure colors and clean inks, such like vermilion, blue, carmine, black. It is the moment of the proclamation of the Assumptionist dogma before the religious orders and the lay church –*

*there the artist takes a self-portrait, there is Pepa, his girlfriend, there are his closest friends and associates–; It is precisely the moment in which Pius XII signs off with the liturgy and the great ceremonial one of the most beautiful Marian*

*passages. The front wall, in turn, is divided into three murals. In the center, the largest, the Christmas of the Virgin –25 square meters with 11 figures of 3.30 high–, based on white, violet and sienna colors. A new geometry is accused with the use of chromatic triangles. The two remaining murals measure 3.30 by 1.45 and they represent two angels –as if inspired by those of Giotto or Leonardo, Verrocchio, Botticelli– adult angels with cartouches at their feet: "Angel Turiferario" and "Angel de the Lilies" and the text "Sic amica mea inter. filias" and "Sicut liliun inter. spines", respectively.*

*On the sides, divided by stained glass windows –designed by Alfonso Saura– other murals of identical size and a height of 6 meters, closed irregularly, and with themes referring to Mary: The Presentation of the Virgin in the temple, The Annunciation, The Birth of the Sir, and the Visitation to your cousin Santa Isabel. A whole program, as the old ones did, but with a new way of understanding these scenes. Ramón had just experimented with investigating more vibrant and, perhaps, more suggestive aesthetics. "It is very pleasing," Rafael Coloma said at that time, "to see that Ramón Castañer's canvases, even before they were known, already raised a storm of opinions"; and it was the year 1957, a whopping thirty years ago, almost a third of a century.*

*Later, Ramón Castañer, returned from Paris, with this absolutely necessary, fruitful, essential diction, was requested in the parish of El Salvador in neighboring Cocentaina –summer 1961–: "Ramón Castañer's brushes are always current. A vibrant, colorful, substantial news...", as Revert signed in a journalistic gloss. A new mural, the Lord's Supper: Christ blessing the chalice surrounded by his disciples, figures built – as if sculpted in a finely textured bas-relief, à la Ghiberti – and impregnated with colour. "Color is for me – Castañer Segura pointed out at the time – like an anthropomorphic Pentecost".*

*Later, at the end of this new decade of the sixties, his works in the new church of El Cristo de la Luz, in Valencia. A gigantic Christ of 18 square meters, treated as if in the blinding vision of a new multicolored, translucent and brilliant stained glass window. Along with a scene of eight square meters, which represents, precisely, a Pentecost, carried out completely free of any religious formalism, seeking only – and it is everything – a lively atmosphere, of full spiritual concentration. Figuration with abstract reminiscences, in a line of style and a common thread that is the chromatic unit and even of shapes, manners and gestural attitudes.*

*Ramón then assumed, not once or twice, but four times, the commitment, the risk of offering iconic novelties in the post-war church. It was quite a challenge, and a danger at the same time. But Ramón Castañer was guided by a conviction at the same time that he was faithful to some ideas. His art could not be soft, accommodating, traditional, but rather new and dynamic, as he managed to do.*

---

**“40 Years of Painting”, 1987, Alcoy  
Presentation on the opening day. Adrian Espi**

**Ramón Castañer, Diaphanous Trajectory**

*Rarely in painting from Alcoy has this been the case and the characteristics that can be seen in the art of Ramón Castañer have been produced. Perhaps due to professional deformation more than for any other reason, historians tend to apply a definition or hang a label on a historical fact. The same division by eras, the grouping by schools, the approach by periods based on ephemeris or dates of relief.*

*In the field of painting, and painting from Alcoy more specifically, we have accustomed our readers and researchers to say that Antonio Gisbert is the painter of the “history” painting. That Emilio Sala –although it is plural– is the painter of large and expressive portraits. That Lorenzo Casanova creates a school and gives way to “casanovismo”. That Francisco Laporta is an eminently “religious” and “hagiographic” painter. That Cabrera Cantó also founded a coherent group and that his art powerfully influenced the first third of the current century...*

*When we get to Ramón Castañer – and the artist began to be one from 1947, now it is forty years old – the painter slips away from us, he resists being corseted and labelled. He paints, creates emotions, investigates and solves problems, opens new paths or walks on those for which the mere fact of walking is already an experience and an enrichment.*

*Portraits, landscapes, interiors, complicated scenes and others, on the contrary, infinitely simple. Lyricism and naturalism, abstraction and hyperrealism. Oil, watercolor – rarely–, ink. Trends and procedures of a huge variety. It wants to be –and it is above any other contingency– plural and variable, always different although always within a rich and juicy aesthetic. He is he – and may we be forgiven for the appeal – he and his circumstance, a circumstance that forces him not to repeat himself, to appear new, to weave and unweave if desired, but with the aim that the new voyage is opposite and renewed. It is, for this reason, and in the true and total sense of the word, a creator.*

*And his vitality is such – he always tries to use large formats, which are the ones that give him the most satisfaction, and where he really faces difficulties – that*

*Ramón Castañer appears open to everything, a communicator, receptive through these years of live art. He is a fluffy painter.*

*It happens to him like Picasso. Its periods can be studied, analyzed and understood in a flat way. We have become accustomed to seeing the master from Malaga through a stage of formation and hesitation, a blue period and another pink, a cubist stage and another surrealist, a moment of Mediterranean and Hellenistic joy and in a few hours of trends, on the contrary, expressionistic and bitter. Our Ramón Castañer also has marked, biased and delimited aesthetic times and days. This is how we have seen it and this is how Adrián Miró was right to point it out when he analyzes him throughout his career.*

*Ramón starts and hesitates. He studied with Pepe Mataix and with Segrelles, studied at San Carlos. He undertook the undertaking—portentious at the time—of decorating the church of Santa María, also doing so in total disagreement with the painter Oliet, whose neoclassical canvases still appear in the presbytery. He embarks on the adventure of flat color and geometric lines. He is a cubist Castañer, lyrical and expressive at the same time.*

*The world of the informal and of abstraction is another of the convulsions that he must make his own experience, to later introduce materials and volumes on the support, thus giving the plastic element another loquacious and decisive dimension. Other paths and other inspirations—drinking for it in literary texts and universal verses—, even of a romantic nature, to later search for a sense of humility and family peace, of memories and the fugitive scene—never banal, always vital—the indestructible beauty of the simplest and even everyday things: gauze, wild flowers, baskets, gas lamps or coal irons.*

*Ramón Castañer thus covers his own demands. The very moment in which he lives and vibrates by the environment that surrounds him, by the atmosphere that he breathes. He has been to Paris and has analyzed the light and color of the “Café Dupont”. Before, still in the military, it has been Morocco that has gotten into their retinas: the Kabileños, the covered blackberries, the traveling musicians. Castañer illustrator, eloquently illustrator of stories and poems.*

*He has rediscovered Alcoy - from its viewpoint in Agres or its watchtower in Valencia or Madrid - and has rebuilt the baroque temple of San Mauro in the first communion of a girl, the neoclassicism of the circular façade of the church of “La Mare de Déu”, or the non-transferable, eternally beautiful ritual of “les talleruques de paper”, the monstrance, which is prepared for the “Processó d'els xiulitets” or the colorful and magical knock of the “Gloria festiva”.*

*There is Ramón Castañer, wizard of the brush, creator of environments and situations, evocative of the past, conjurer in the “Genesis” and creation, or in the natural sculptural grace of dry, rigid trees, always standing. But always, always, Ramón Castañer is color.*

*First it was the color. Have you felt it?*

*A musical color that burns in its vein.*

*An essential color of concrete light.*

*Treble clef or sound lark.*

*Through color you reach the goal.*

*It emerges in the tube, strong,*

*delicate. Later, I echo song, sad, lit, to the*

*canvas, already in flower, of the palette.*

**Retrospective exhibition in Alcoy. Hall of the Savings Bank of Alicante and Murcia.**

**"Information", December 30, 1987 -**

**"Ramón Castañer: 40 years of painting", by Román de la Calle, (art critic. Vice Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Educational Sciences of the University of Alicante).**

*I have to confess – almost like a memory, now recovered from childhood – that the first painter I saw directly engaged in his work, up on top of the scaffolding structure, creating a mural was precisely Ramón Castañer.*

*I must have been greatly impressed by that mysterious demiurgic capacity that was progressively creating a world of gigantic images on the wide vaults and walls, since I frequently gave in to the temptation—almost clandestine for me—of approaching and sniffing among the conjunctural hangings that hid from the public the gradual development of his historical work. In fact, for a long time, in my subconscious, the figure of the painter reproduced a certain physical prototype: his.*

*Then, certainly, time develops its diaspora on us and existential events are written on very different pages. For this reason, this retrospective exhibition –with the characteristics of an authentic anthology–, which Ramón Castañer is now offering in the place of his (our) origins, is, without a doubt, a timely occasion for reunion and just global remembrance of his diversified artistic career.*

*I have always considered these singular initiatives to pay homage and balance of an entire itinerary appropriate, just as I deem necessary the corresponding support for the promotion of the young generations. They are two complementary modalities of institutional action: if one helps to lay –we would say– the first stones of the construction, the other testifies and recognizes the results of an individual history, fortunately still open and in season.*

*Ramón Castañer (Alcoy, 1929) has known how to combine in his path -like so many other names in our contemporary artistic history- the double aspect of dedication to teaching and dedication to personal aesthetic creation. A duality that, by the way, has undeniable advantages, also does not fail to present the pertinent servitudes, to the extent that each of the two facets imposes its jealous demands, its satisfactions and its own restlessness.*

*But now and here we are more interested in the specific milestones of his pictorial production. Seen as a whole, its itinerary has been as versatile in searches as it is stable in yields. It would seem that, perhaps, it is possible to differentiate, from the outset, a whole extensive series of patterned stages that in turn tended to be integrated -in their diversification- in a broad first period characterized by constant inquiry and that led him in a persistent, but not –accelerated, process of a figuration touched by a certain moderate cubism up to abstraction and the experience of incorporating the most varied materials into his compositions.*

*Undoubtedly it was, above all, a sincere openness and constant discovery of serious possibilities. They constituted an important bank of tests that, together with the stylistic pilgrimage, were in each case submitting to the adequate reconsideration -almost even monographically- the treatment of the*

*colour, the play of spaces, expressive resources, the performance of materials and textures, as well as the rhythmic and compositional tensions of the works.*

*Ramón Castañer thus materialized his creative concerns and his eagerness for knowledge and experimentation through the development of different aesthetic values, from the muralism of the time to the expressive attraction of informal syntax, from the challenge of the geometrization of compositional planes in figurative scenery –always impressive– from wall decoration to the inclusion of ashes, cement, resins or wax... in his most expressive works.*

*In this way, following the pulse of each conjuncture, he went from a certain narrative desire to a marked intimacy, where the vital values of the environment were being translated in parallel into personal expressiveness through the direct manipulation and integration of materials.*

*And it was perhaps this interest in the structural value of matter that, curiously, led him at a certain moment to look aesthetically at all the humble and evident richness that natural reality itself possessed: in a concrete way he discovered that small/great organic world that constitutes the very bark of the trees, its roughness and asymmetries, its broken forms and its few chromaticisms, its ramifications and its cavities, its intricacies and its almost magmatic results that come out of life itself.*

*Wasn't this perhaps a random passage towards the natural reality of the environment from the very bowels of the plasticity that he had sought in the direct performance of the materials in his paintings?*

*It is symptomatic the fact of "seeing" almost suddenly and discovering as something fundamental -for the first time- what in truth has always been "looked at" as something irrelevant, by our side.*

*Chance and the game of analogies are sometimes decisive in the life of a painter, because here Ramón Castañer, going one step further, soon discovered that "the landscape of the human skin" also contains with its grooves, crevices and ridges, the entire history of life, just like the bark of trees. And that was how his reunion with the physiognomic and expressive values of the human was decisively produced, but now from other assumptions, other demands and different artistic objectives.*

*Both the monumentality of the figures and the explicit syntactic contrast of the materials in their transit through the abstract options were suddenly far away.*

*Doesn't this open a definitive second period in the career of Ramón Castañer? A period where a special interest in the world of the humble will prevail in the human types that he collects in his canvases, in the most disparate objects that he finds in his environment or in the environments and scenes that characterize everyday life.*

*It would be said, then, that he has made his choice both thematically and linguistically, with the meticulousness and technical mastery that is proverbial for him, interpreting the surrounding reality with a particular fondness.*

*Sometimes, with appeals not exempt from certain symbolism, others with a direct exposition of the selected matter. Ramón Castañer has been moving since then -within a sustained line of work- in that specific referential range where "the return to things themselves" prevails without this implying the abandonment of a personal reading of the world and circumstances.*

*There is, without a doubt, many twists, decisions and perplexities in an entire artistic career that spans four decades. All of this is part of the*

*story that braids and unites the heartbeat of life itself. The current anthological exhibition, as always happens on such occasions, only represents a sector of the visible part of an iceberg: the rest must be guessed or intuited directly –between the lines— before the works themselves.*

*Here, too, only certain keys of urgency, linked to affection and memory, have been shelled out to try to outline the profile of an entire itinerary. But the **map** –it is already known– is never really the **territory**.*

---

**Inauguration of the mural dedicated to Saint John Bosco, in his centenary year Made by Ramón Castañer  
Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Plaza Mosén Josep, 1 Alcoy  
Presentation, Adrián Espí Valdés, December 20, 1988**

*150 square meters of painting – in oil, on canvas attached to the wall – are, in effect, many meters. It is an ambitious and complex decoration, not easy to carry out, elaborated, of course, following an iconographic program previously drawn up and studied. Ramón Castañer Segura has undertaken the company not with skill -that such a characteristic must always be assumed- but with extraordinary enthusiasm. It has been the illusion that has generated this exceptional creative force, I would say unrepeatably, which has been setting the standard and configuring each and every one of the extremes that have intervened in this extraordinary chapel –Castañer's "Sistine" chapel.*

*Many are the elements that have come together in Castañer's work, and that have been in the summer months and in the autumn harmonizing the plastic discourse. The great adult angels of manly presence, the reunion with a happy and significant past for Alcoy, the processional image of Mary Help of Christians, the life and wisdom of Saint John Bosco... The gray cloths that break on the scaffolding, the pastry chefs of the canopy, those boys from yesterday who posed before a street photographer... Light and theology, a whole way of being and understanding life that the artist, the color poet, has revived and created in a generous way .*

*Ramón Castañer has left on the roofs of Santa María, and the churches of Valencia and Cocentaina, and even right here, on the altar of San Pancracio, shreds of his creative capacity and expressive force. But now, on this Salesian apse the artist has grown up. It has once again been the Castañer of high-rises and large surfaces, but the Castañer, in turn, different, like new.*

*Now he has narrated with warm words and strong figures and has left on the surface the creative spark that fuels feelings and identifies men. His murals of the Salesians are epic songs, and even deeds, treated with the balance and depth that simplicity requires and still demands. And so, without a doubt, these canvases, these canvases united by color and drawing, are a perennial prayer and a feeling of depth.*

---



**Magazine "D. Bosco in Spain" No. 515, March 1989****To remember. "The Sistine Chapel of Castañer", Benito Castejón**

*With the name of the "Sistine Chapel of Castañer" he baptized Professor D. Adrián Espí the mural of the chapel of San Juan Bosco that Ramón Castañer has made in the church of María Auxiliadora in Alcoy (Alicante).*

*The 200-square-meter mural was inaugurated on Tuesday, December 29, 1988, within the commemorative acts of the CENTENARY of the death of Don Bosco.*

*The "CENTENARY Commission" made up of the Director Mr. Ángel del Barrio, Alumni and Cooperators, decided to undertake a work dreamed of for a long time: the decoration of the semi-dome of the altar of San Juan Bosco.*

*The work was commissioned to the painter from Alcoy and former student of the Festival Oratory D. Ramón Castañer, currently Professor of Art in Madrid.*

*The artist, well acquainted with the Salesian Work in Alcoy, has reflected his collegiate and Alcoy experiences in the immense painting that delights the eye and ecstasies the spirit.*

*To better understand the painting we will divide the description into three parts: upper central part, left part and right part of the viewer.*

*1.- UPPER CENTRAL PART: Among the bright colors of fire, the Holy Spirit stands out in the form of a white dove, and starting from Him, a spiral enlarges to signify that the entire Work of Don Bosco is moved by inspiration from on high.*

*A choir of angels and "angels" dance around the Holy Spirit as a symbol of joy and celebration, characteristic of a Salesian environment. The artist has resolved on his own the unfinished theological discussion about the sex of angels. The dancing "angels" are distinguished by their feminine forms and by their grace and ease in dancing; the angels are larger and less agile when dancing.*

*2.- LEFT PART OF THE SPECTATOR: Theater – playground and sports – devotion to Mary Help of Christians are three fundamental elements in Salesian education.*

*A curtain hangs from a protruding beam with inlays at the bottom; two angels hold up the curtain and a stocky "black angel", with a guitar on her shoulder, helps them with their homework.*

*A photographer, with his tripod machine, captures for posterity a scene from our Festive Oratories of the 40s: a soccer team (here, Atlético Salesiano, of old tradition in Alcoy) with its president holding the trophy and the clergyman Salesian, assistant in the courtyards and animator of the boys' game.*

*In the dark box of the "portrait machine" the painter has made some "collages" of photographs from his youth.*

*The procession of Mary Help of Christians continues to be, in Alcoy, the most showy manifestation of devotion to the Virgin of Don Bosco. Old Students carry the litter, First Communion boys and girls surround the passage, altar boys and faithful form a procession. To give perspective to the procession, the artist has solved the problem in a very original way, but one that is familiar to the people of Alcoy. The last section that the procession covers is the narrow street of Sto. Sunday, the neighbors usually decorate the balconies by hanging the most colorful quilts stored in the*

bunker. In the mural, angels are the ones who carry out the tasks of supporting the quilts as the Virgin Help of Christians passes by. One detail is striking: the angel in the center holds the quilt with his left hand and holds an eyedropper with his right hand and, on it, a date (August 23, 1988). Why this detail? At that point and on that day Ramón Castañer suffered a heart attack that took him to the gates of death. The illusion of finishing his "work" multiplied his strength for a quick recovery. The Virgin kept it for us so that we could contemplate this marvel in ecstasy.

A basket of wild flowers placed on a white cloth helps hide the hot air coming out of the church's heating system. The basket and the flowers are in such relief that it is hard to believe that they are painted.

3. - RIGHT PART OF THE VIEWER.- Don Bosco sitting next to his desk in the office is of such naturalness and expression that no one notices the sculptural group of San Juan Bosco with Sto. Dominic Savio, who is below.

A strip of faint purple rises from Don Bosco upwards. Does it mean the effort that leads to holiness? The painter wanted to capture the "dream-vision" in which Don Bosco saw his disciple Dominic Savio leading a crowd of young people, fruits of holiness from an educational method. Fifty faces of boys and girls from "our playgrounds" frame on one side Saint Dominic Savio in a white tunic, girdled by a red sash and with an armful of lilies.

Under Sto. Domingo Savio the bust of Laura Vicuña, a student of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesians), beatified by Pope John Paul II last September. On the right, a dark gray curtain highlights the figure of Don Bosco, dressed in priestly vestments, just as he was "in person" in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. Don Bosco's face shines with peace; two angels look at him and a third carries the soul of Don Bosco towards heaven.

The artist from Alcoy and former student, Juan Rufino, who helped Ramón Castañer in the execution of his masterpiece, made a stained glass window, with a great ornamental effect and light, for the window that is in the middle of the mural.

The succinct description of this wall painting is to interpret the attached photographs. The contemplation of reality elevates to "ecstasy" all of us who live in the spirit of Don Bosco in this city of Alcoy.

---

**Poem by Mariano de Córdoba,  
(read on the day of the inauguration of the altar of San Juan Bosco)**

**FROM THE SALESIANS OF ALCOY,  
UP TO THE OUTSIDE OF HEAVEN**

*I have climbed through all the  
galaxies of  
the Cosmos, to that  
celestial blue, where the sky  
begins, and the painters get lost.*

*In that same place,  
where silence rests.  
Where the spirit enjoys...  
Where dreams are beautiful...*

*In that rigid scaffolding, of  
saddened tubes, listening  
to the litanies, reciting  
commandments, rosaries and  
our fathers*

*In the galaxies of the Cosmos,  
Ramón together with his brushes...  
In the galaxies of time, Saint  
John Bosco comes to see him.*

*In the galaxies of the sky,  
harmony is dressing in winter,  
with all the melody of the color of the  
firmament.  
And, all the Salesians, taciturn, are  
playing with the psalms, lost  
between the times.*

*The liturgy of the saints fills  
the temple with incense, and  
Ramón, -the good-natured teacher,- gives  
his brush strokes throughout  
the sketch.*

*Beauty and silence merge  
into the making of history, and  
Don Ramón  
Castañer paints the  
thresholds of glory with  
masterly love.*

*In the galaxies of the Cosmos..  
Where the blue begins, only  
you walk...  
You walk only you.*

---

**DIPTYCH OF SONNETS TO THE ANGEOLGY OF RAMÓN  
CASTAÑER**

**Adrian Espi Valdes**

Yo

*Painter friend, man and companion: explain  
your work all your wound, total  
action, shared word, strong color,  
drawing of the path.*

*Silencing the darts, prisoner*

*of prophetic and anointed hope, the  
life of love well scattered is a  
severed, righteous cry.*

*Against gravity and still without fear -  
amazing panorama, faithful landscape  
you have dreamed, you have painted with your fingers.*

*Your brush, Ramón, is light that caresses,  
and renders love, alleviates the  
vassalage that the angel offers to God: propitious faith.*

**II**

*I assure you, Ramón, my friend,  
that I myself danced the beautiful  
dance with angels naked from the  
belly, foreshortened, dynamic with brio*

*that in symbolic cascades that I long for  
seek peace. Sardana of hope, saints from  
heaven, pennant, the stubborn spear,  
temper of summer.*

*Above only the vertigo that escapes.  
You have had, Ramón, the privilege of  
painting and dreaming. your light catches*

*a feverish world where movement stops  
reason: psalm and arpeggio,  
landscape of eagerness: the peace of the wind.*

---

**"To the great friend, painter, and human being that Ramón Castañer keeps."  
Guillermo Garcimartin**

*The rainbow,  
what did it say to you in the  
frond of shadows and colors, the storm already broken?*

*You came from the  
night and you sat down before  
the Aurora: you rubbed your eyes from a mist of  
centuries: Retinas full of cliffs, ocher, and  
distances flickered  
With the fallen clay you already made an  
outline like a wounded reindeer...  
Did the liturgy begin in Altamira?*

*Since then, a  
luminous entity inhabits your pupils.  
Light, color, movement: a triptych of magic and beauty began to  
walk; began its journey as a prodigious  
shell on its route of  
mineral mirrors.*

*Others will be the roses, the sun, the continents!*

*On the virgin rock.  
On the cobalt easels, all the agitation  
of the world, all the crucible where  
the prisms melt their arcs every day  
in torrents of lines and  
foreshortenings, of loose brushstrokes,  
light as a flight of lace and foams  
that sprout from the edge of your palette .*

*You came from the  
night, from that golden jungle that the sphinx  
consecrated; What did the Aurora show you?*

---

**SYMPHONY OF PAINTING IN THE GALAXIES  
(Homage to Ramón Castañer) Mariano de Córdoba**

*Despite the psalmodies that escape from your  
garden...*

*Despite the nature of the mountains that  
seize you...*

*Despite so many pleasant things in your  
environment, I beg your pardon at all costs  
because I didn't know you.*

*However, your painting filled me with  
memories.*

*The beauty of your canvases...*

*The expression of your colors...*

*The exquisiteness of your themes...*

*The strength of your messages...*

*Everything was familiar to me.  
Absolutely everything.*

*I knew you from  
yesteryear, wayfarer.  
Landscape pilgrim.  
Harmony maker.*

*I knew you from long ago,  
in deep intimacy*

*with the distance.  
I knew you, in that sublime wandering  
where the stars play.  
I knew you, through the air and  
through the times,  
and in that sensitive part  
where your brushes sweat.*

*I knew you, because the muses  
told me a lot about you, and  
the gnomes of the forests search  
while silence.*

*I knew you, because being  
great your painting you  
filled her with humility.*

*Of symphonic poems.  
of descriptive force.  
Of romances.  
Of uncertain dawns.  
Of nostalgia and love.*

*It was written in the centuries,  
the same as other painters, and  
like the poets.  
The oil that came out of your palette  
was anointed.  
It had been mixed with myrrh.  
He was exempt from pride and sin.  
That's why I knew you...*

*Later, when the centuries passed and the  
horizon was filled with  
secular beauty, I saw  
your name in the stars.*

*Your brushes giving guard of honor to  
museums, and your palette,  
splashing with color,  
that sidereal picture of spaces.*

---

**THE CHAPEL OF SAN JUAN BOSCO, BY RAMÓN CASTAÑER  
Adrian Miro**

*The poetic and illusionist universe of Ramón Castañer has had its most recent plastic realization in the mural of the chapel of S. Juan Bosco, of the church of the Salesians of Alcoy. They are 200 square meters in which his great virtuosity to create the sensation of space and depth has reached a high degree of suggestion and magnificence. The iconographic program tends to evoke the figure of the saint (his life, death and his sublimation), in the part of the epistle on the altar, and the presence of the Salesian family in the city in the part of the gospel. The ensemble is splendidly crowned by an irrepressible dance of angels around the*

*symbol of the Holy Spirit. The bold foreshortenings of this dance show Castañer's extraordinary drawing skills, his vigorous visual arts, his deep and vibrant tones, his astonishing daring to solve the most difficult problems of illusionistic perspective, of harmony of rhythms and volumes.*

*Our Ramón Castañer has always had a sense of monumentalism, of large spaces in which the magic of color can vibrate majestically and generously. Already in 1955 – and in this same Salesian enclosure – he revealed the maturity of his technique in the decoration of the chapel of San Pancracio. Then came the 150 square meters of the presbytery of Santa María de Alcoy (1957), and the 80 meters of the "Lord's Supper" in the church of El Salvador de Cocentaina (1961.) The paintings of the church of Cristo de la Luz in Valencia (1969)... The painter from Alcoy manifested, through a whole series of personal experiences, that the meticulous and detailed style that he had lately reached in his oil paintings –a minimal brushstroke bordering on hyperrealism– was adequately in keeping with art monumental.*

*The mural of S. Juan Bosco is presented to us with a deliberate theatricality, in the lively attitude of many characters, and in the warmth of the colors. But in which the different scenes are structured with great clarity, without intricacies or confusion, separated by exquisitely refined cloudscape and glazing, by soft fades and dim phosphorescence, by contrasting effects with different axes that are so many sources of light. different scenes are balanced, more by dissonance than by agreement – life and death – the playful (a soccer team, some theater masks) and the religious, the impetuous dance of the angels and the photographic immobility of the titular saint, thus finding a cohesion, a logic, a rhythm of masses that attract the viewer in an irresistible way. Here there is no architectural framework, as in Veronese's, which could build and elevate an entire scenic apparatus. And an opening on landscape. And a gradation of perspective in the distance. Everything is framed in an aerial space, without appoggiatura, with a stylization of the real that reaches poetic inventions, like those slender angels holding ethereal draperies that play the role of balconies that frame the passage of the procession through the narrow and typical street of Santo Sunday. Or that unreal little head of a saint, Laura Vicuña, the most recent of the beatified Salesians.*

*The mural culminates, without a doubt, with the frenetic dance of angels under a spiral of light that leads to the paracentric symbol of the Holy Spirit. It is the pinnacle of the work, both in its literal sense and in its perfection. It is not about adolescent angels, with prepubescent and subtle bodies, but rather attractive girls and robust young men whose thin veils barely hide their arrogant muscles – true anatomical studies – and their bodies full of life and youth. On another occasion ("Glossary of art and artists from Alcoy", page 80) we said that Ramón Castañer was a painter touched by angelic grace. And, indeed, ever since that series of expressionist angels from the 1960s that led to pure abstraction, the angelic theme has joined his way of being and formulating himself.*

*But what is an angel? It may be a twisted wire, it may be a fulmination of color, it may be a naked body vibrant with humanity. In this recent mural (and this can be seen, above all, in the sketches that were exhibited in the San Jorge Gallery), the angel is a sublimation of the human body with everything that culminates in the perfection of Creation. In this angelology, Castañer has not forgotten a very "rock" angel –symbol of the times– in the magnificent body of a black woman, carrying her guitar across her shoulder. What really*

*subjugates in this representation of the angelic is the audacity and perfection of the foreshortenings (true touchstone for muralists) with a series of daring deformations for the perfect visuality of a spectator who has to contemplate the optical effect under a rotunda roof and with a height of 35 meters.*

*In the problem setting chapter, there are, indeed. And many arduous. Castañer is a painter who loves problems and complexities, and who solves them without dilettantism, in a determined and shrewd way. We are amazed by that image in procession of Mary Help of Christians that, in effect, it is clearly observed that it is an image, that is, an inert sculpture, in the midst of all the living bodies of angels, devotees and communicant children. We are also surprised by the graceful way in which he has managed to incorporate into the mural –as part of it, not as something inserted– a vulgar heating radiator, discreetly hidden under splendid mantles and flower baskets, a cumbersome pitfall that would have embarrassed the most expert artist. .*

*For this one must undoubtedly possess a certain sense of humor, and Castañer has it, in spades. It is known that our painter suffered a serious heart attack in the course of the work, perhaps due to the arduous effort. The reference has remained there, in the angel brandishing the clinical deposit of dripping, instead of a rain of petals, foreseen according to the sketch of the aforementioned exhibition. The old photographer from the thirties shows a series of yellowed old photos on his outdated apparatus . The viewer hardly realizes that they are "collages" and that among them, there is a youthful photo of the service in the "military" of the author. What else?. A keyring hanging from the belt of one of the processionists turns out... that it is real, that it is stuck there, that it is not a hyperrealistic trifle. Thus we could adduce a whole series of details, which have found a skilful expression full of vitality in the painter's ironic humor. That is Ramón in the finest and most endearing of his humanity.*

---

**Words pronounced by D. Antonio Revert Cortés, in the act of inauguration and blessing of the mural dedicated to S. Jorge, Patron of Alcoy, in the Sanctuary of María Auxiliadora, on February 13, 1993. (Text reproduced in the Program Official Festival of S. Jorge de Alcoy, in April of the same year)**

*Sartre said, in his existentialist conception of history, with great pessimism, that man is a useless passion. But man, among other things, is capable of creating art and art is a rigorous passion, as replied by his contemporary and also a writer and Nobel Prize winner, Octavio Paz. And within this rigorous passion is the art of Ramón Castañer, as a variety of the miracle. His fury nests in the brushes, his strength in the colors and his noise in the altars. Here is an enthusiastic, vehement, fiery, ardent, impetuous and violent artist, in his excessive love for painting. It should not be forgotten that Ramón has dedicated many hours, months, and years of his life to enriching the cultural heritage of Alcoy, generously giving us -every work of art is a generous donation- his extensive artistic creations, three of which are reflected in this church. of Mary Help of Christians: the chapel of San Pancraccio, that of San Juan Bosco, and, now, that of San Jorge, which today is discovered, like a hallelujah, in the hearts of all of us.*

*It is not easy to express in words the pictorial capacity of such an illustrious artist, because his immense mural work is impregnated with that fresh color, that*



*direct treatment from the scaffolding to the canvas, of that honesty that characterizes all his oceanic execution.*

*Since prehistoric times men have decorated with graphics, and figurative lines, graffiti, what they saw around them, capturing in caves, in natural refuges, those cave paintings, dawn and roar of muralism, which in the Middle Ages and then in the Renaissance so much glory and splendor they gave to Painting, in capital letter.*

*The Catholic Church, she knew, immediately saw the enormous possibilities of spreading the good news, of catechizing people, through the creative impulse of art, since images charge and cathedrals and convents, monasteries and hermitages, the refectories and sacristies were soon filled with saints, scenes from the Gospel, Virgins and Christs. It was a convincing way of explaining, in a plastic and simple way, to an illiterate people, the themes of the Holy Scriptures, of embodying the evanescent figures of angels and, in short, of bringing religion closer to the common people. Thus arises the medieval and Renaissance muralism that has given so many sparkles to universal culture. Later, with the invention of the printing press and the consequent reproduction of images, books replaced the didactic function of hagiographic muralism. However, the church appropriates it and continues to use it, forever incorporating it into its cultural heritage and introducing it into the cult of dulia and hyperdulia. The church, ges, has never abandoned muralism and has been airing it as a great liturgical conquest, which does not mean that muralism became secular, as demonstrated in the great Soviet current of realism, after the October revolution followed by the Mexican muralism by Siqueiros, Rivera, Orozco and many others, who planted infinite civic spaces with authentic political proclamations and pamphlets, without undermining their artistic qualities, obviously.*

*Mural painting must necessarily adapt to a given space. It is the plastic united to the architecture. And that obligation, within those limits is its greatness. It is like the majestic sonority of a few hendecasyllabic verses, chained to a rule that give as a happy result the well-done work of a sonnet.*

*The panel that is revealed before us tries to perpetuate the Moors and Christians festival –our festival– from its vital side, to record what has been lived, to reflect the feeling of the partygoer, the gestural scenery, to fix the face of the friend, dressed in the habit of the crusader, for posterity, while our patron saint, on horseback, breaks the April sky and protects all the hearts of Alcoy with an outstretched hand. Let us keep in mind that this mural does not reflect our festivities, but rather reveals them, transfigures them for us. It's not about painting history, that's what Cabrera's mural is for, it's about chronicling, raising an iconographic record of the immense altarpiece of the Moors and Christians of Alcoy, unique in the world, forever and ever.*

*Three things we would highlight in this mural, apart from its well-studied scenographic composition, as a sacramental play. First of all its wide range of colors. Color is the ornament of painting. There is a sarabande of ultramarine blues, Persian yellows, emerald greens, cobalt blues, golds, siennas, ochres, to later form a fanfare of indigos, fuchsia carmines, cadmium whites, in their fluttering of doves. , rainbow of peace, grandeur and reverberation of a festive rite without equal, of our Moors and Christians.*

*Next we would highlight the value of Ramón Castañer, alone before almost two hundred square meters of canvas, suffering hardships, cold, loneliness, fighting with arms*

game with spaces that are never filled, between a labyrinth of scaffolding, thirty-five meters high, and with the sword of Damocles on top, traitor heart attack, lady of the dawn, who already visited him on a previous occasion, when he was painting the altar from San Juan Bosco, the neighbor across the street. But for this time Ramón has equipped himself with friends, he has set up his workshop at the top of the scaffolding, and has had the collaboration of Francisco Aznar, Juan Rufino, Francisco Picó, who have helped the master with their presence and their humble brush, in this event. It is fair to acknowledge it here today. Thirdly, we must highlight the enormous drawing of Ramón. The architecture of his drawing has made the realization of this altarpiece possible. The charcoal of Castañer's master hand, sketched, first, the 72 figures that are in it, giving life to the forms and breathing soul into so many characters, as they appear in this altarpiece of wonders. All this with unusual vigour, with inner strength, convinced that he was doing a work for posterity.

But Ramón, like other muralists, wanted to paint many of his friends, as Boticelli did, in the Adoration of the Magi, who put the faces of the Medicis and court intellectuals on his characters. Castañer has chosen figures from Alcoy, some out of commitment, others out of friendship, and has immortalized them on canvas, also adding his self-portrait on the back of a camel, as an undoubted signature. It is the curious anecdote on top of so much category.

In the workshops of the Renaissance, he used to repeat: "Nobody can claim to achieve mastery if they were not a geometer." To make a mural, to have perspective, to achieve these foreshortenings, which we contemplate today in this work, Ramón has proven to be a good geometer, therefore, we sincerely believe that he has achieved mastery.

Let us finally advance, that Castañer, has kept in mind, when painting this altarpiece, Goethe's advice: "Take reality into account, but put one foot on it." You will see, then, realism, hyperrealism, impressionism. There is everything in the palette of the master of painting, but above all, you will observe poetry and dreams.

Let us conclude with this affirmation: the work of his hands proclaims the cosmogony of the Festival.

---

**Ramon Castaner. The Artist and Love. (text published in the Revista de Fiestas de S. Jorge, Alcoy, April, 1993)**

**Antonio Castelló Candela (librarian of the A. de S. Jorge, Alcoy)**

### ***The wall***

We have never felt in our flesh or in our minds the sensation that the empty and sepulchral whiteness of a canvas can produce or, in the case that we intend to deal with, of a wall as the element or support that serves for the creation of the work of an artist, a painter. We have felt, yes, in the, we would say, daring literary incursions, sometimes indescribable sensations when facing the whiteness of a sheet of paper, perhaps because of "the dimming of lights." Indecision, hesitation, fear of not being able to express our correct thought; fear of empty phrases and meaningless sentences; terror that the idea will not reach the addressee neat and clear, turning the writer's vital need to express himself into an unintelligible melopea for the reader. These ghosts that constantly swarm through the corridors of our brain force us to be

*as rigorous as possible in our approaches. And we ask ourselves: will there be a single reader, if there is even one, who dares to follow us on the adventure? Will our effort contribute something to the knowledge of ourselves? In any case, let's be brave with ideas and language, let's expose ourselves to the opinion of others and to criticism. From honesty and, above all, from rigor, let's dare.*

*We intuit, we only intuit, that in the painter, an artist from the caves, something of all these fears, mixed with a tremendous dose of creative desire, will be present in his mind when faced with the creation of a new work, of an important and transcendental work. .*

*We are talking, of course, about the Mural that the painter from Alcoy, Ramón Castañer, Honorary Mayor of the Association of S. Jorge, has been doing in recent months in the sanctuary of María Auxiliadora of the Salesian school of S. Vicente Ferrer and whose theme has been Saint George the Martyr, patron saint of Alcoy and the Moors and Christians festival.*

*We are aware of this and attest to the fact that it took almost three years from when the first idea of the work germinated in the soul and in the head of the artist until, with several dozen sketches under his arm, the most important muralist in the history of painting from Alcoy faced almost two hundred square meters of smooth and not flat wall.*

*Let's live in the moment. The entire cosmology of the Fiesta is under the arm of the artist. Sketches of the clothing of all the ranks, some of which have already disappeared; Captains; partygoers with "Cabreristas" dalmatics; ancient "cavalries" on the back of steeds with strong, almost sculptural necks; flight studies of hundreds of pigeons; floats, beasts, pennants and scripts; happy girls, boys and girls, gestures, gestures, angels with anatomy that seem to have escaped from the "great baroque sermon" and Saint George, the most universal of Alcoy's patron martyrs. Everything is studied, everything is thought out: Mane, Thecel, Fares. The great concert is written, Ramón Castañer, alone, holds the large folder that holds the score and in front of him, the Wall, cold, silent, empty; just the ecclesiastical solemnity of the religious setting.*

*Since a man felt the urgent need to outline his hand on the wall of a dark cave, obeying, perhaps, an order emitted from his genetic code until today: how many times has the true artist felt that sensation of transmitting his message, his speech or, simply, his idea? What sensation will have come over him before the emptiness and the consequent temptation to fill it?*

*Divine agoraphobia whose cure is in creating the unborn?*

*Meanwhile the Wall remains silent; undaunted, it awaits the onslaught, without haste –there is no clock that measures its time–, and by enduring the gaze and the challenge of the artist, it becomes more concrete in its structure. But the die is already cast.*

### **"Graffiti"**

*The silence is broken. A slight creak slides smoothly through the wide spaces and through the corners of the church. The temple becomes more of a temple, wanting to silence the strange whisper that sometimes breaks the recollection of the faithful. For now, silence again. The strange sound comes and goes; already tears, already caresses our ear.*

*Curiosity leads us to the origin of the mysterious activity and we discover the cause: a man, an artist works. Ramón Castañer, abstracted, in silence, draws.*

*The white and empty Wall, what makes no sense, nothingness, what "is not", is disappearing. In its place the artist's hand slides a charcoal, the most useful and terrible weapon of the creators of all time: their creative instrument.*

*Brain and hand, hand and brain. And the hand brandishes the tool to say what it feels like, what struggles to get out of a man's soul.*

*No one stands between the genie and the Wall. The eye framed in the triangle radiates shapes from the painter's intimate universe. Shapes, volumes, shadows, everything is known, everything is old, but everything is new, even our amazement at the miracle of creation. And the lines advance. From the first point, eternal "big-bang", the expansion is unstoppable.*

*The whisper of the charcoal continues, sometimes the duel between the artist and the Wall is dramatized, and the charcoal breaks. The whiteness of the Wall tenaciously resists losing its virginity and becoming a sublime "graffiti". But art always wins. Like "a river of lions" the force of the painter is unstoppable, and nature, once again, will have to imitate art. The simple fabric of polished stone and mortar will have to become a pulse of life, a work of art.*

### **quasi scripture pictura**

*There is no choice but to paraphrase Razvan Theodeorescu when he rightly quotes Saint Gregory the Great. We must borrow the title of one of his works and expand the Gregorian concept by beginning the third and last part of ours with his "picture quasi scripture" to talk about Ramón Castañer's Wall.*

*The artist wants to finish his work; will never get it. Satisfaction, let's not talk about perfection, does not exist in the spirit of the painter. But his cry, his anxiety, his desire is already embodied. We notice how he is still panting and then with prejudices we approach to contemplate the Mural—"... Without prejudices, judgments cannot be formed" says Ortega y Gasset—. But let's see the result of so many months of work.*

*Saint George at the top of the dome, fleeing from the front of the wall, rides in peace over our heads and our souls of Alcoyans. Below, in the center of the scene, four dalmatic-clad bearers hold the precious load with a certain air of indifference and pride towards those who contemplate them. Behind them, a cloud of doves beat their wings in a sky of eternal spring. It's only April!*

*On the Gospel side, three Cyclops sanctified as angels codify the ensemble by raising the shield of Alcoy. The speech becomes clear. The Gregorian maxim, the "quasi scripture" continues its course.*

*And already the Party; the rest, the group filling the spaces, building the Wall, transforming nothing into everything, the total Festival, devotion, emotion and tradition, including the landscape, rural and urban. Everything that is felt when evoking it from the soul. And more than telling the story, expanding the Gregorian concept, Ramón tells the sensations that living and feeling the Fiesta, his Fiesta, has produced in his soul.*

*From our position as spectators, whatever it may be, let's take half a step back and look straight ahead: twenty-eight rows, omnipresent, we*

*they amaze. Right halfway between our real world and his stony, pictorial world. The most advance their feet wanting to invade the everyday fleeing from the eternal. What hand do they extend to us?*

*We are assailed, inadvertently, by more questions. In what secret place of Ramón Castañer's soul do these forms, these volumes, these colors, this universe of characters, sometimes epic, large, almost mythological and sometimes small, tender, affable in their being and in their being, inhabit? Where is the miracle of the hand that transforms and interprets the lightning that your brain throws? Love would then have the word. Love of life and people. Love of history and the tradition that shapes us. Love of who we are and of what belongs to us. Love without measure that germinates and bursts in Ramón's chest like a rose of beauty and generosity.*

*We don't want to dissect the work, we don't know either, we just want to learn and attest to the artist's feeling. What we feel, what we say, we do it through psychic sensations and even having Ortega's alibi that says, speaking of painting "... I don't think it's pernicious that everyone makes an honest attempt to orient themselves in what they don't know" and if someone branded us as reckless or disrespectful we would say with the philosopher, speaking of the same thing, that... disrespect is, after all, a form of treatment.*

*And here the subjective. So, the Mural remains, the newly built Wall, for the enjoyment and devotion of the people of Alcoy as an art lesson, as a love lesson for an artist in love*

---

**Ramón Castañer and his chapel of San Jorge (text appeared in the Ciudad newspaper, on January 19, 1993) Adrián Miró**

*I have been strongly impressed by Castañer's mural, which is already in the last brushstrokes. More than seventy characters give life to a poetic and bustling universe, where the realism of the figures is enhanced by a vigorous plastic and vibrant tones. Castañer's great virtuosity to create sensations of space and depth, to harmonize volume rhythms, reaches a high degree of mastery in this mural.*

*The iconographic program tends to exalt the image of Saint George and its projection in the Moors and Christians festivities in Alcoy. The holy horseman crowns the complex with his brave Roman figure, but not in the attitude of a "matamoros" but rather as a symbol of peace, extending his embrace to infinity, imposing harmony among men. It is a new version of the patron saint of Alcoy, more in keeping with the Christian sense of the victory of Good over Evil. The "foreshortenings" (that is, the blurring necessary to produce a natural perspective of thirty-five meters) show the extraordinary gifts Castañer's draughtsmanship and his audacity in solving the most difficult problems of optical effects. Foreshortening is the true touchstone of every muralist. A sensation of flight towards infinity that we are given not only by that airy rearing steed but also by a luminous and triumphant flight of doves –perhaps the most accomplished feature of the mural– and by the presence of three bodies (true autonomies) of an angel, with wings we would say of a swan rather than an eagle. Even the light "pardalot" of the Alcoy shield helps this feeling. Everything flies and goes up towards the dome, everything is a rise towards the celestial and eternal.*

*On the other hand, the lower parts are presented to us as a theatrical scenery. On the Gospel side there is a reminiscence of the past: the little cardboard horses, a carriage mounted on an Essex car from the twenties, with the evocative detail of the thermometer on the engine to avoid excessive heating (a whole era!), the disappeared comparsas represented in the old Tomasinas. An overflow of flowers, with a minimal and graceful brushstroke, shows us the hyperrealist Castañer touched by the grace of the poetic. The Epistle side evokes a moment of "alardo" in which characters and gunpowder appear diluted in a ghostly atmosphere.*

*On the front, the author wanted to recall, as a kind of festive cycle (I was going to write I don't know why "panatheneas") a specimen of all the clothing of Moors and Christians. It is not the typical act of "the Glory", but rather a clothing showcase. The individualization of all the characters is revealed both by the different and lively attitudes and by the warm color and firmness of the drawing. Many of the "festers" have their own names. The author, with his cordial vision of friendship, has thus wanted to perpetuate the image of friends and compatriots. Among them we highlight, for what is emotionally evocative, the figure of the Salesian Ángel del Barrio, who was the one who suggested this mural to him when he was still decorating the chapel of San Juan Bosco, and who died of cancer precisely in 23 April feast of Saint George.*

*All this group does not appear within an architectural framework, nor in a gradation of perspective, as the great Venetian muralists, Veronese or Tiepolo used to, but standing out on a long red damask -what qualities and gradations of red!- with soft Zurbaranesque folds. , which covers the platform on which the central scene rises, the one that should draw attention to its conclusion: the relic of the saint, with its sparkling gold. And on each flank the figure of both captains, with their pomp and splendor, completes the scenic apparatus. I have spoken of theatrical staging and that is the effect it has produced on me. In the previous mural of San Juan Bosco, the painter composed the different scenes, separating them by cloudscapes and glazes or by the effect of contrasts with different light sources. Here the various anecdotal motifs are structured in a large altarpiece, but without intricacies or confusion with a cohesion and a very dignified and clear logic.*

*Ramón Castañer, like any good artist, is a painter who loves problems and complexities and who solves them with a determined hand, without dilettantisms or simulations. And he also enjoys procuring us unheard of surprise effects. For example: that inspiration to reproduce in a sky finish the light filtered through the circular holes of the metal tables at the moments when he was painting on the scaffolding. Surprising is the least that can be said.*

---

**Brush in solitude. (column in Information of Alicante, Sunday December 6, 1992, in the section "Encuentros") Antonio Revert**

*It is not frequent, in these times, vertiginous and botched, to come across a painter in the image and likeness of the artists of the Italian four hundred, capable of spending half a year painting the mural of a church, with a space in front of about two hundred meters squared, up, hanging, between scaffolding, planks and catwalks, from dawn to dusk, Saturdays and Sundays, brandishing spatula, brushes and trowels and devoted body and soul to the noble task of*

to capture a lasting work, in the Italic Renaissance mode, which undoubtedly reflected the genuine idiosyncrasy of the Alcoyana Fiesta.

That painter is called **Ramón Castañer** and he has a noble record as a muralist, as a painter of churches. We can assure, without a doubt, that in the entire Valencian Community there is not a single artist who has such an extensive pictorial work—ecclesial, enthroned on the altars, like this artist from Alcoy. Now he is dealing with a mural—the virile space of painting—dedicated to Saint George, patron saint of our city, with the great parade of the Moors and Christians, in the background, in its brilliant explosion of light, color and figure.

And in another foreshortening, let's say that these days the Association of Valencian Art Critics met in Alcoy, chaired by **Román de la Calle**, and where the aboriginal critics **Adrián Espí Valdés**, **Joseph Albert Mestre Moltó** are registered .

Invited by the City Council they were eating, under the presidency of the councilor / poet **Joseph Pérez and Tomás**, they visited the Archaeological Museum—highly commendable work—and nobody thought of visiting the church of María Auxiliadora to contemplate <<in situ>>, the work, the agony and the days of a painter who is leaving his life in this great panel, a legacy for posterity.

We believe that it was an obligatory visit, as it was also a sung route, to contemplate the restoration of the mural of Don **Fernando Cabrera**, the great painter from Alcoy, who received the first national medal in 1906, in the church of San Jorge.

We regret this inadvertent oversight, but an opportunity to gold panel, to admire the oceanic work of these two local painters.

Many of **Rafael Alberti**'s verses come to my mind, in his book entitled "To painting", but I choose these, as a final rubric that say: "Brush in solitude, brush sunk / in the dark, filling / with gusts of light and tremors / of earth all the sky".

One realizes, with the passing of time, and the many readings, that the masterpiece is a variety of miracle.

---

**Exhibition "Cultural Center d'Alcoi." May, 2001**  
**Ramón Castañer, "El Petrolio –1873". Texts of the Catalog**  
**Presentation of Miguel I. Peralta Viñes,**  
**Mayor of Alcoy City Council**

As fate would have it, on July 10, 1873, the name of Alcoy remained engraved in blood, forever, in the annals of universal history.

Now, one hundred and twenty-seven years after the death of the Mayor of the City, Agustín Albors, and other residents of Alcoy, in the tragic and mournful events of "El Petrolio", I am preparing to write these notes for the extraordinary exhibition of paintings on this subject. It has been made by one of the best muralists from Alcoy of the 20th century, our beloved painter Ramón Castañer.

I have to confess that the commission I received caused contradictory emotions in me: barricades, demands, shots, fires... death of Alcoyans at the hands of Alcoyans.

Judging the past from the present is always complex and can lead to erroneous interpretations, to the Manichaeism of dividing the people of Alcoy from that

*times in good and bad. We would be building a barricade against our own history, judging those who, in specific conditions, demanded fairer working conditions and those who, from power, also justly, defended the established order with courage and dedication of their lives. All this in the midst of intrigues, foreign tensions and facts that are not entirely clarified.*

*Regardless of the cause of the internationalist revolution, the concrete outcome of the events of "El Petrolio" was the result of unrestrained passion, collective neurosis, obfuscation, provoked deception, outburst and obstinacy, the devastating action of ignorance duly fed.*

*This is not how revolutions are made. Life has no price. If we have to learn something from those events, it is that political confrontation can only use one weapon: the word, the true architect of the understanding of people, peoples, and nations; distinctive and exclusive trait of the human being.*

*In the hall of the Plenary Hall of the Town Hall, the meeting place for the people to decide their destiny through words, there is a plaque dedicated to Agustín Albors. That man who debated between freedom and order, in the apt expression of Antonio Revert. May we never have to decide between that one and that one. Freedom with order, and order with freedom. They are complementary concepts, not exclusive.*

*The democracy that we have achieved, that we enjoy, the one that we Alcoyans of today share, among which there are descendants of yesterday's protagonists, has combined these principles. Freedom must be exercised respecting the rights of our neighbors, among which stands out, as a necessary condition to exercise all others, the right to life.*

*Through the eyes and the palette of Ramón Castañer we will see the fact and the lesson, which in any case, is clear: "no one should ever die like this".*

---

### **Text in the Antonio Castelló Candela catalog**

#### **THE GENESIS OF A WORK OF ART: THE SERIES OF "THE PETROLIO" BY RAMÓN CASTAÑER**

*The first two weeks of August 1994 were especially hot. The south wind did not stop embarrassing lands, people and landscapes. From the open viewpoint of the Botella farmhouse in Agres it could be clearly seen that Valletta had not just shaken off the tremulous haze of the day. Agres, freshness, Agres, cold and snow stored in deep cellars that make our echo resonate. Agres, apples with flesh as hard as stone and fig trees with fruit as sweet as honey, provisions that Ulises carried when he traveled to the islands, but the Xaloc and the cicadas in their thunderous and uninterrupted stridular sound bring us back to the reality of the hot afternoon. There, in that viewpoint where hospitality and affection come and pool, there is the painter, looking into the distance, and like the Azorín knight, he also sees there in the distance how a tiny train crosses from time to time the little valley. Neither, when looking, will they be able to take away the painful feeling from their eyes, but behind, for the*



history, his works have remained: *The Virgin at her Birth, at her Visitation and at her Assumption; a Christ crucified in shameful nakedness, a scandal of modesty, and another Christ of Light; a glorious Pentecost and above all, angels, angels who not only adore God and Christ but are like a spiritual reality created in people who exhaust their species in each individual, tender angels and strong angels eternally ascending in their glorious lightness. The devotion and the memory in San Juan Bosco and the tradition and the celebration in San Jorge, the children, the men and the town, his town: Alcoy. And since the signing of the mural to San Jorge, forty years of pictorial creation contemplate us.*

*There in the viewpoint, together with his family, the painter receives his friends and acquaintances, everyone, affability occurs in him in a spontaneous, natural way. In conversations they talk about everything, movies, theater, landscape music and farm work, traditions and those who are no longer there and, of course, painting. Of the mystery of color in El Greco, of Velázquez, of Goya and of Sorolla, always of Sorolla, of his light and his colour, of his genius. But, there, sitting in the gazebo, on that hot afternoon, the painter shines a small carbuncle in the depths of his eyes. No melancholy, no longing for time gone by, painting, painting is what matters, he says. The afternoon is falling and in the conversation they talk about the internationalist revolution in Alcoy of 1873, the "Petrolio", the influences of the Paris commune on the workers of Alcoy and the density of a population that exceeds Manchester at the same time. , of desires, of struggles, of public order and of freedom. The end, we already know, a mayor, Agustín Albors, who will die walking on the razor's edge between freedom and order, as Antonio Revert aptly titled his biographical study on Pelletes ; six more deaths and a trial that will weigh like a stone on the minds of hundreds of Alcoyans.*

*The painter, Ramón Castañer, has made up his mind: he will paint the death of Mayor Albors and, like Courbert to his friend Champfleury, he will immediately say: I will show that I am not dead yet, nor is realism. From that very moment all the ideas will lead to the same project, history, oral tradition, the press of the time, the newspaper of sessions of the Courts, the manuscripts of some eyewitnesses, bibliography, everything is carefully studied; the scene of events, houses, balconies, corners... the painter, Ramón, looks at everything, investigates everything, social climate, attitudes, tensions. From the distance that separates him from events, Ramón is given one of the essential conditions necessary for the project to be a creative project: freedom, and he clings to it. He will let his feelings and his "idea" of the event flow.*

*Everything from Alcoy, like Gil-Albert, belongs completely to him and will be the benchmark that he will wield in his own right.*

*First of all, the protagonists of the event will pose for the story, and they will do so next to the barricades. They are, as in the distribution of theatrical performances, the characters will stage the events that, inexorably, will lead everyone to their fatal destiny. The barricades that with all their props of furniture, remains of wagons, ladders, logs of all thicknesses and any jigsaw, have been erected by the revolutionaries to besiege the "tyrant." Oh, and the cans, many cans full of oil. Ramón composes a perfect mise en scène not without an ironic grimace.*

*-Who's going?*

*-Petroleum!*

*The chosen password is definitive. You have to corner the "beast" in its burrow with fire so that it does not escape. And we ask ourselves: What terrible reasons push the besiegers? No trifle, of course. Which of the heartstrings has to be broken or have to be broken in men to make these terrible decisions? They wield weapons, fatally, but they also wield work tools, survival tools, perpalos, shovels, files... death and life for the Alcoyans.*

*Ramón asks himself hundreds of questions, some difficult to answer, others without answers. The artist's responsibility is evident and Ramón senses it more than knowing it, he is the creator's sixth sense. The painter is afraid of mixing the feelings that the dregs of Alcoyan experiences and memories have been forming in his soul and pure and simple reason. He has no other choice, he will go to Olympus and there, he will conjure the gods. Let them decide.*

*The daughters of Zeus and Themis immediately turn the drama into tragedy. The die is cast. Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos will have to fulfill the orders of the son of Chaos and Night: Destiny. From Atropos's belt hangs the ribbon that holds the long scissors, she will be the fatal key to history. The oldest of the Fates will fulfill her mission once more and cut the thread of Agustín Albors's life whenever she feels like it. That and no other is the question. Other people will be tossed about according to the mood of Fate.*

*But the painter, Ramón Castañer, is also concerned about the composition of the climax of the tragedy: the death of Albors, by Pelletes . He wants to reflect all the pathos of the action from the death of the protagonist, his figure does not matter too much . To do this, it is enough to show part of his corpse, the legs, and the rope that he wants to introduce the victim into the scene. Like Sisyphus with his stone, those who drag the immolated mayor will never be able to insert it into the canvas. The color on this occasion does not matter, only white, the rope that drags Pelletes , she herself will give us the key to color throughout the series. An oblique line from bottom to top and from right to left will divide the work. Above the push of the mob, in the center the force of two individuals tense the impossible and below, with his back turned and as if oblivious to the event, the "boy who watches".*

*The child who watches carries a copy of El Parte Diario under his arm , but it is not a copy of the present, it is a copy of the future. The news that is narrated in it are those of the event, but in the past tense. The newspapers will tell their version, the chroniclers theirs, the politicians theirs, but he, the child who watches, who watches us, who warns us, has been there and has seen everything as it has been, as it is, without falsifications or dressings and warns us severely. His look is deep, coming out of the well of his black eyes warning us of what should never have been done and what should never be done. It is not the curious look of the child who looks at the same painter in Titian's The Madonna with Saints , nor the graceful and shy look in Herod's Feast by Strobel the Younger, nor the indolent look of the little Asturian in the mural of Saint George by his own Ramon Castaner. The child who looks in the Pelletes is something else, they are the branches of the Birnam forest that approach our consciences making noise to wake them up, it is the premonition of a future*

*loaded with omens and the reproach of the past. His mysterious gaze will never cease to disturb us.*

*Three years have passed since the painter, Ramón Castañer, sitting on the viewpoint of Mas de Botella, looking towards Valletta in Agres, was born with the will to capture on canvases what had always belonged to him as a native of Alcoy, the events of The Petroleum. Now, on another day in August 1996, he will put his signature on the finished work. There, forever, in the quiet solitude of the San Antonio gallery of the Alcoy cemetery, there remains a tombstone that reads: Agustín Albors Blanes, Mayor of Alcoy, his bloody and mutilated remains are found under this slab. Rest in peace.*

---

**Text in the catalogue, by Adrián Espí Valdés, Director of the "Juan Gil-Albert" Institute of Culture in Alicante. Member of the Association International des Critiques d'Art (AICA).**

**RAMÓN CASTAÑER IN THE DRAMA OF A SOCIAL AND WORKER REVOLUTION IN ALCOYANA. THE "PETROLIO" AND THE DEATH OF "PELLETES".**

*Somewhere they have insisted on the constant of Spanish painting in search of unity and coherence of light. And there has been talk about how and in what way so many teachers express themselves in black and white –like the great filmmakers and true masters of the seventh art–, valuing the elements that could be understood as negative along with those that offer a positive reading. , achieving in an orderly way the formalist field of images.*

*And that being said, one immediately thinks of much of the work of El Greco, a certain production by Valdés Leal, of course by Zurbarán with his monks in black and his monks in white. Work by Francisco de Goya in that exciting and highly innovative series of the so-called "black painting" series executed for the "Quinta del Sordo". Or the expressionist work of Antonio Saura, one of the great creators of the contemporary world. And why not Picasso? Picasso, who once passed the blue and pink stages, and after beating his constant versatility through so many languages, left us in 1937 with his "Guernica" and, perhaps as interesting or even more interesting than the final paper, the series of sketches, projects, drawings and essays that define and teach the path traveled.*

*Ramón Castañer Segura is a painter who likes large formats. He finds himself installed in them, even though the effort is enormously great, but at the same time –and that's what it's worth– positive and enriching. We will return to the previous idea, that of whites and blacks, but it is necessary to talk about those paintings of a more extraordinary dimension, or the murals placed in the apses of churches, lunettes and front walls.*

*Without leaving Alcoy -apart from those carried out in Cocentaina-: the parish church of Santa María then in full reconstruction, in 1956 -1957, when the artist recently arrived from Paris, carried out an entire plastic and aesthetic program on the Assumptionist dogma and the birth of Maria, using pure and flat colors, large figures, up to three meters high. 140 square meters.*

*The temple of Mary Help of Christians in our city is, without a doubt -apart from other existing mural paintings there, more recently its particular "Sistine Chapel" given that in three different altars its poetic narrative has been forging stories, reeling off arguments, shining with light. The theme of "Saint Pancracio baptized by Pope Saint Marcellinus" appears in his first intervention in this sanctuary. Later, in 88, 150 square meters of attached canvas on which endearing religion and local anecdote, universal history and that which is closest to us go hand in hand to narrate, both together. From San Juan Bosco and Santo Domingo Savio to the historic "camet" with its soccer team posing for posterity.*

*And it arrives later, a very short time ago, in 1992, mounting on the monumental scaffolding twenty-three meters high, the cry of color of the Fiesta de Alcoy with Saint George on a winged pegasus of incombustible light. The chromatic expression: yellow, magenta, green, blue, burgundy, red, ivory tones and even the black of Mossen Torregrosa's clerical cassock. A gallery of portraits that, as if in an act of imaginary "glory", with horses and dromedaries in the background –on one of these noble animals appears Ramón Castañer dressed as an abencerraje, his filà, therefore a self-portrait–, with adult cherubs and openly men who hold the city's shield... A passionate song to our Moors and Christians who here, on the apse, are energized and gain perpetual reality and presence in the city.*

*But Ramón is – has been and will be – an easel painter. In exquisite canvases, he tells us about the perennial beauty of the Mariola herbs, dry but always fragrant. Collect the most substantial feeling of the little things that become nostalgic memories. It is novel and even magical in that "Christ on the cross" made for the Alcoy High School, retired that was no longer cult but simply visualized. Rafael Coloma said that it had to be titled "the Christ of Castañer", in the same way that there is a Christ by Zurbarán, by Alonso Cano, by Velázquez, by El Greco or by Dalí, even the yellow Christ by Van Gogh.*

*Here there is blackness, muted and austere tones that lead to meditation to say the least, ashen and Zuloaguesque tones -"The gray hour"- by means of which the artist distances himself from the perennial hot and warm inks in his production. Also remember the "Finis glorie mundi", disturbing and pathetic car graveyard, end of opulence and transition to nothingness thanks to the blackened color, the blandness of color... the stuffy "Saint Joan of Arc" from which He has said that it is like a "dramatic lark..."*

*And those hollowed-out, broken and twisted trunks in the void that surrounds and places them? Rough and solitary trunks that gesticulate expressionism and a feeling of loneliness in their soulless nakedness. A wide range of blacks and ochres, together with the hurtful white of the surroundings, taking poems by Celaya, Alexandre, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Hierro, Carmen Conde and Gloria Fuertes to baptize them.*

*Remember, if anything, the stage in which the artist uses, and with waste and generosity, material, in which he is inscribed in the manifestos and glossaries of the*

*abstract to return later to the field of magical realism and even hyperrealism...*

*But now we are – and we return to muralism, although understood in a different way – before Ramón Castañer's large format, made with black and white and all possible tones and semitones in the chromatic scale limited by both colors. Perhaps the most universal page of Alcoy is the one that Ramón narrates in his canvases. It will not be the happiest, but it will be the one that has made it possible for those labor movements, those incendiary days, that atrocious crime to have been studied by sociologists, politicians, economists, historians from within and from without. Elizabeth II in exile, Prim murdered, Amadeo de Saboya very ephemeral and incidentally, the First Republic installed. 1873, Calle del Mercado, buildings sprayed with "petrolio", cans full of inflaming fuel that are emptied in front of the buildings and belongings. "The Spanish and American Illustration" that deals with the facts in magnificent engravings that go around the world. And a mayor –constitutional mayor–, a man of the so-called "glorious" or "Septembrine", who falls before the mobs, before the uncontrolled shouting of the workers and of those, among the workers –and "at a troubled river..."– they intend to scream louder and louder and perhaps get a "slice" of so much horror.*

*Agustín Albors, co-religionist with Pi y Margall, Emilio Castelar and José Serni, a federal republican, lives firsthand the paperworkers' strike of "Els Algars", witnesses the workers' assembly that decides on a broader, general-scope strike. On July 9, the internationalist leaders leave the City Hall. Shots ring out and the workers arrest one hundred and fifteen of the largest taxpayers in the city. Albors, as the highest authority that has, among its functions, to keep and keep the peace, public order, directs several volleys against the insurgents on July 10, sheltered behind street barricades and then begins the arson, of several buildings using of oil. The fight continues and the mayor is located, and then, in the most barbarous way, he is assassinated... General Velarde with eight cannons and a large contingent of soldiers –it is said that 4,000–, also members of the civil guard and volunteers, enter the city... but the fringes and consequences of these bloodless acts will survive. In Alcoy the so-called "revolutionary six-year term" has had a truly hard and even macabre role.*

*So much delirium, so much cruelty –manipulations and demands– needed no longer those world-famous engravings: factories on fire, the insurgents dragging "pellets" –the mayor–, through the streets, in front of the portico of an "invented" building with traces of church gate; those hostages or major taxpayers – "senyorets" – detained in the courtyard of the improvised jail or main square, the mobs on Calle del Mercado and the flames engulfing the buildings... demanded a pictorial vision of what could undoubtedly be understood – and to be understood – the "Guernica" of Alcoy or the "Guernica" of Ramón Castañer. Something more than contemporary xylographs, something that was capable of impressing by its accurate "loving" interpretation without surrealism or invented abstractions, without impressionist visions of the subject but simply expressionists taking for it -as is common in Ramón- living models capable of "posing" of being "Pelletes", the most brutalized worker, or the kid who is an eyewitness of such days.*

*Ramón Castañer and from his refined technique, from his extensive knowledge of the trade he serves with dedication, with representative fidelity, "that virtue so difficult to achieve for realistic painting", creates an atmosphere, a propitious climate, tells something true without "inventions" or misrepresentations of the historical truth. Here is the Goya of the "Executions on the Mountain of Príncipe Pío": realistic, direct, truthful. And for this reason he was obliged to reflect on the days of July 1873, doing it conscientiously, with whites, blacks, and greyish, because this revolutionary and internationalist "film" was photographed in black and white and, at most, in sepia.*

*Notes, sketches, figurines... gestures, even. All supporting material that, like "Guernica" –and I refer again to Picasso– constitutes a decidedly and magnificently irreplaceable contribution to discover the creative process, the steps taken, without picturesqueness or anecdotes, but with demand and severity that is accompanied with the powerful drawing expressiveness and compositional balance. Taking a risk and being responsible for "his" own complaint.*

*Let us insist on painting and say that it is a "legitimizing" work, full of emotion and even commitment, endowed with a strongly expressive and "didactic" language. A painting that escapes the tyranny of color but not that of light, even exchanging lights for shadows. It is a cry of reality, and reality is a concept and a concept is what matters in Art*

*The versatility of Ramón Castañer, the plurality, the thematic richness and the mastery of his hand, driven by intelligence and balance, provide us with this rigorous and exceptional work.*

*And one, before this portentous and hard-working work –materially and intellectually– still does not understand how it has been parked in previous years, finding no occasion or even place for it to be exhibited. But... this is another matter.*

---

### **Text for the "El Petrolio" program, by Antonio Revert**

#### **RAMÓN CASTAÑER: THE "PETROLIO"**

*We are facing the cultural greatness of the most important historical fact, for better or for worse, of the city of Alcoy. A fact that changed the destinies of the city and that exploded throughout the world like a universal bomb, as one of the most notorious attacks of the First International, the anarchist International, which tried to break the shackles of the workers, with terror and debauchery, using oil as a persuasive weapon against the bourgeoisie, in a utopian desire to break the established order. In a word, the Revolution exploded, that Revolution that made Engels say how a revolution should not be carried out. And the revolution was made in July 1873 and it went down in all the manuals of History as "el Petrolio". This is the fact that the muralist painter Ramón Castañer has now captured in iconographic images. It is about the reproduction in two huge canvases, of the revolution to which we have referred. Let us remember that the First International caught fire in Alcoy, where it found an industrial city on the move and an abundant proletariat.*

*The First International established its regional residence in this city and after the anarchist Congress of Córdoba in 1872, a man named Severino Albarracín came to establish his residence in Alcoy, who was in charge of raising the city up in arms and seizing power. as a possible trial for other cities. But Albarracín found himself with a mayor with guts, who had risked his life many times for freedoms, liberal, progressive, anti-monarchist and if not revolutionary, yes, unruly and dissident, whose life had moved between freedom and, now, order constitutional. A man who for those times could be described as a left, a bourgeois left born from the Revolution of 1868, which dethroned Isabel II, but far from the anarchists and who only had cantonalism in common with them, which both preached, but this within a Federal Republic a la Pi y Margall and far from any internationalist anarchy.*

*Severino Albarracín had his doctrine, had a broad anarchist culture and was backed by the First International with the doctrines of Marx and Engels as infrastructure. Agustín Albors was the classic romantic of the 19th century, liberal, progressive, democratic and Freemason, who always fought for freedom and who, after a long history of riots and riots against servility and conservatives, had finally reached the mayoralty de Alcoy, having been a deputy in the Constituent Cortes of 1869. These two figures clashed after a general strike raised by Severino Albarracín. He was wrong if he believed that Albors was going to give him command. Once again he was willing to risk his life for freedom and try to bring order to the city. Severino Albarracín and his men murdered him vilely, implanting terror and the Commune in Alcoy until the government forces brought order to the chaos and barbarism. The chronicles and the oral tradition say that after the death of Agustín Albors, Pelletes, he was dragged away by the crowd.*

*Here are the facts succinctly narrated so that the spectator of the paintings that Ramón Castañer offers us today understands the tragedy. Having seen the two bowls of the story, Castañer portentously rushes to narrate it, without taking sides in it, without judging the story, but revealing it. We are not facing the obsolete "historical painting", but rather something alive, a notarial deed of what could have been the tragedy that devastated our city, to reflect, with passionate activity, with art, a historical event of great magnitude. , and he does it in black and white, without didacticisms, because as Octavio Paz said. The meaning of history is not beyond, in the past or in the future, but in the now and here.*

*I couldn't tell you, as Huizinga points out in his Renaissance and Realism work, if Castañer's work is a descriptive or illustrative realism or an emphatic and evocative realism, what I can tell you is that we are before a work of art, before a living mural , torn and tragic, stark and impressive, dynamic, gestural and a scrutinizing retina from the inside out. Observe for yourselves and judge the magnitude of this work. Then discuss, talk and congratulate yourself on being before the most important page in the history of Alcoy, made by the brush of this huge and enormous painter that is Ramón Castañer. Notice the entire exhibition, its sketches, its careful preparation, the study of the figures, and, above all, the two large canvases that give body and category to the work: one is the barricade –  
The city is totally taken, in a state of siege–, the other is the lynching of the*

*constitutional mayor, where he is dragged through the streets while the furies scream and the grim reapers stir. It is the culminating moment of the Revolution, it is the fallen angel of freedom, while soon the night will burn with oil, whose cans are already prepared, in the solitude of the fists and the blue of the starry night of a torrid summer in tragedy.*

---

**Ibi Municipal Archive Exhibition. La Llotja Room- September 1–10, 2003 THE  
FESTIVAL AND RAMÓN CASTAÑER**

**Text by Nicolás Martínez Ruiz Councilor for Culture, Festivals and Traditions.**

*From the Department of Culture, Festivals and Traditions, we can only be proud to collaborate with such a timely initiative and, if I may, in such good taste. Because talking about Ramón Castañer is talking about art in capital letters.*

*I sincerely believe that it is not unreasonable to say that the artist from Alcoy is one of the most brilliant contemporary artists of Valencian painting and a living reflection of the best virtues of Mediterranean painters. Because Castañer, as a native of Alcoy and, therefore, like the Ibenses, fully marked by that special character of those of us who were born in the "Alicantine mountain", does not stop being Mediterranean. And it is precisely that light of the Mediterranean, present in all his work, together with the feeling and knowing of those who have grown up in the interior of the province, which is present in all his work, thus combining the best virtues of both characters.*

*Thus, by now approaching this exhibition that, in the first days of September, will announce that our big days of celebration are approaching, we will be able to delight ourselves with an art exhibition that is in itself a sample of Fiesta with a capital letter. In each work we will see our troupes reflected with astonishing fidelity, accurate detail and at the same time, with that mastery of light and color that presides over all of Castañer's work. And as in other works by the artist from Alcoy that we have had the opportunity to contemplate on previous occasions about our town, its festival and its patron saint, we will continue to be surprised at how Castañer captures our daily reality, in this case about the festival, just as it is. if I was born here. And this, not only because of the richness of colors, details and knowing how to reflect in his work every corner of our town, each character, and in this case each of our comparsas, but, and above all, for knowing how to capture in each work that feeling that makes us think that Castañer is just another Ibense.*

*Because only from that feeling of loving what is being shaped with the brushes, works like "Mare de Deu d'Ibi" can be made, which is already the icon, with capital letters that best portrays the beauty and uniqueness of the image of Our mother. Or corners like our "Llavor Vell", "La plaça El Riu les Caixes" or "La Font de la Plaça L'Esglesia", which are already part of his work and of our cultural heritage that, in a more reliable way, portray corners of our dear Ibi.*

*I conclude by evoking the work of Castañer, "Mare de Deu Xicoteta", in which a close-up of the Virgen de los Desamparados with the Child in her arms captures all the beauty, depth and feeling of the image of our Patroness and that, as I mentioned before, it is a clear reflection that Castañer, when painting motifs of our*



*town, has seen how we live and feel our Marian devotion.*

*With the works that make up this exhibition, Castañer leaves us a cultural heritage that reflects the iconography of each and every one of the troupes from Ibi, who could not have had a better maker than the brushes of the artist from Alcoy, whom we are already beginning to consider, yes so we are allowed as our own. Let us therefore delight ourselves with a collection of works that go beyond art itself, since they are a reflection of our festival and, therefore, of our tradition and culture.*

---

**Text by Antonio Castelló Candela for the Ibi Program**

**THE PARTY AND RAMON CASTAÑER**

*At this point, Ramón Castañer does not need a business card in Ibi. It is, well, all the works that he has been carrying out over the last ten years on a purely Ibense theme are. Fully identifying with the feeling of a certain people, with some customs, with some collective feelings is not an easy task for any artist who tries to gloss certain particular aspects of a community if there are no specific determining circumstances that make the approach have affective connotations. .*

*These affective connotations will make such an approach carry in itself the concern to know the what and why of certain attitudes towards events about history, tradition, festivals and, in general, the particular idiosyncrasy of that collectivity that is the town.*

*Ramón Castañer, with a good dose of seriousness and reflection, and from the artistic impulse of his brushes, has shown time and time again throughout the last decade his affection for Ibi, putting his genius at the service of this affection.*

*From his interpretation of the Mare de Déu d'Ibi in 1994 to the most recent illustrations that we can admire in the latest issue of the Magazine published by the Festival Commission, we see the purely Ibense pictorial trajectory that forms Ramón's work. Up to five times Our Lady of the Forsaken has been a source of inspiration for the artist: the aforementioned Mare de Déu d'Ibi, Regina Angelorum, Mater desertorum, the Mare de Déu del Asilo and the illustration for the article A bumpy procession: that of 1823.*

*Ramón's attention to the Ibense does not end there. In 1999, an exhibition on rural and urban Ibi showed us endearing corners dressed, already in a hurtful luminosity of its sky, like a Ventorrillo curdled by snow and cold. Streets, hermitages, fountains, the old laundry... everything was fixed in Ramón's kaleidoscopic eye.*

*The artist does not rest. His attention to transferring the Ibense theme to any support does not diminish. His brain attends to what his gaze dictates. A look that transcends ours and that at the Fiesta is excited by the explosion of color that it entails in itself.*

*The painter knows the Ibense Festival, not in vain has he been a spectator for years and nothing escapes his retina. Any detail, any object: a cape, a turban, a tunic, a weapon... everything is rigorously analyzed and commented on to the audience who with him look at the Entries year after year as if they were from one more Ibense. treated.*

*It was natural, almost, we would say, forced, for Ramón to contribute his own vision of the Fiesta. Ultimately, it was only a matter of time and opportunity. And this came in a simple, spontaneous way, as a result of one of the numerous conversations held with their hosts –pro partygoers on all four sides– and with the Tickets –the Paseig rather– as a backdrop for the friendly chat. At a certain point, the painter was tempted by José Luis Vicedo Bernabeu, Moorish captain of the Fiesta in 1984, to capture the design and color of each of the comparsas that made up the Ibense roster of the Fiesta. Ramón, who is not afraid of anything in pictorial matters, no matter how difficult and committed they may be, immediately accepts the challenge. He only asks for a certain amount of time for the entrusted work to be thought out and, later, to make the sketches for the careful study of each of the comparsas.*

*Nothing random, nothing improvised.*

*A year later, the work is already a reality. And there, in his study of the Botella farmhouse in Agres, Ramón Castañer showed us the Argelianos, the Chumberos, the Cides, the Maseros, and the Smugglers; the Templars, the Almoravids and Bedouins, the Almogávares and the Mozarabs, the Tuaregs, the Mudejars, the Pirates and the Warriors. The entire Ibense Festival with the gallant appearance of its comparsas from the brushes of someone who had already embodied the devotion, tradition and history of Ibi on several occasions, was done.*

*Notes, features, sketches, canvases... everything had been left behind, surpassed by hours of work and intimate reflection. What at one time was a shared illusion and a project transformed into a challenge, was now a pictorial reality.*

*There are, also, in this exhibition, exposed to the gaze of the Ibenses, all the works that Ramón has carried out over a decade to illustrate the works that Pepa Botella, his wife, José Lluís Santonja and the person signing these lines have gone asking him. Historical research, literary creation, sentimental evocation... any subject serves Ramón to dress the written letter as Sunday. The rapport and identification with the different authors is total.*

*They all have a destination: their publication in the magazine published by the Fiestas Commission. They alone form a pictorial corpus that transcends the reasons for which they were created, acquiring in their own right the creation of a singularity regardless of the subject they illustrate.*

*Nothing has been strange to Ramón, simply letting his feelings speak through his masterful palette. From the slight flapping of the doves to the drama of the inquisitorial punishments through the sweet ingenuity of Los Inocentes. Everything is given to us to contemplate in this anthological sample of his work. The painter from Alcoy, Ramón Castañer, has once again shown that he is one of the pictorial peaks of the entire 20th century, and also that what is purely Ibense is his own, not alien to him at all.*

---

**CRITICAL magazine ART section (July-August, 2005)**  
**Ramon Castaner; a Mediterranean aesthetic.**  
**Concepción Benavent**  
**The MUBAG exhibition**

*With this anthological exhibition, the Diputación de Alicante offers him its well-deserved recognition for the entire artistic career developed throughout his life. In the exhibition it can be seen that the painter Castañer alternates with still lifes and his brilliantly colored landscapes, the descriptive work resolved in large dimensions like his murals. It is important to approach this great artist and his work because of the very personal realism, the rigor of the drawing, the luminous and brilliant colouring. His work will please anyone who enjoys the exhibition or access to his website: [www.pintorcastanyer.com](http://www.pintorcastanyer.com) . It is an outstanding part of our current art.*

**City of Alcoy newspaper (September 15, 2005)**  
**Cultural Chronicle, THE INDISCRETE LOOK**  
**Ramón Castañer, the painter who looks. Josep Lluís Seguí**

**The painter paints to be looked at –also admired, as a consequence–, and his paintings, in due time, look at the viewer. Castañer, this immense painter from Alcoy can say with Matisse: Now the painting looks at me. Now the painting looks at you.**

*Let's stop to look at the painting "L'arrastrà de Pelletes". This work, we know, demands a deep and complete analysis, of its totality and of each one of its elements, of its represented characters, -the rope, the newspaper-: of the plastic meanings that it offers. Let's just look now, for a moment, at the child; that little boy who carries the newspaper under his arm. A kind of flash-forward, in cinematographic terms, with the news and journalistic narration, and ultimately historical, of what happened, we want to suppose. The boy is watching... The corpse of **Pelletes**, who enters the field? The men and women who are in the group? No, look in front of him. We would say that the objective of the camera; to the eyes, to the gaze of the painter. To the spectator of the work, in short. It is a look that demands your attention. To "read" the news of the facts. What happened at another time and later portrayed by the painter.*

*Other **Castañer paintings**, other views, we find in the magnificent exhibition mounted in the CAM. We cannot stop before everyone even if they require our gaze, although it is true that we do not all like them equally, not me, that our painter is a total work and therefore selective for the viewer. Now let's look at the beauty seen, painted. The portraits of that beautiful woman who is his wife, **Pepa Botella** , and who the artist brings to canvas in a special way. There are no concessions to modesty. The woman appears..., yes, in all her power as a female, as a lady and as a woman whose beauty is not only physical. Because you know look, there is intelligence in it, complicity. And if in the one in profile (dated in 1957), he seems to be ignoring us, it is not like that; her entire body, frontal to the bust, makes us aware of the gaze that we rest on her, on the woman, and returns it to us.*

*In the "Portrait of Pepa Botella", from 1953, she looks at us directly, or rather with that feminine, challenging and ironic sideways look. Even when the woman here makes the painter the model –the painter and his model-, there is no stasis in her, but full human movement; it is not a flat shape, but carnal volume.*

*(Let's remember that **Epicurus** called the Body Flesh, and I think that there was some Epicureanism in our sensual painter.*

There are other gazes, other faces, other bodies in **Castañer**'s painting, which I will describe at another time, in another space. Now I want to highlight what three "absences of gaze" would be. The painting *La mine*, the one titled "Ay banished meat, yesterday lover, parched old and extinguished meat", and the one of the forbidden Christ. The workers of "The mine" have their heads down, their eyes downcast or fixed on their task, on the hard stone they work. With hardly any facial features, they nonetheless show the look or its denial. This is how a woman travels, an old lover with parched flesh?, whose gaze, somewhat lost, is higher up than ahead, in another time –past and future– than the one in which she lives.

And that Christ, his naked body, the lines, vertical and horizontal, of his members. And his look. Closed eyes, no gaze? Could it be that he looks at us from the point of immortal eternity? And he says: "Look at me. This is me. Look at me, I do not forbid it" And to those who forbade it: "Forgive them if you want, although they knew very well what they were doing".



*Inauguration Exp Antológica in the CAM – Alcoy, sept 2005*

## PICTURES

While I was writing these memoirs and I was compiling the different presentations, and some press comments from my exhibitions, and when transcribing the one held at the Círculo Industrial de Alcoy, 1957, which consisted of "15 Portraits" of women from Alcoy, I thought that they had been the beginnings of a series of portraits that over the years I made.

Whenever I have painted a portrait, what attracted me was the depiction of the human figure starting from the physical resemblance to the spiritual content. For me, the portrait has never been an artifice of the person portrayed. She preferred simple clothes, without fripperies or beads. He tried to talk with the model to get to know him and be able to capture his character, his simplicity or strength, his energies, either positive or negative.

I have also liked to incorporate in my large murals, portraits of friends and family, as a symbol of affection and friendship.

It occurred to me to look for data, dates and names of the people I portrayed during my life as a painter. And I was amazed at the amount of work done.

I have never considered myself a portrait painter in the style of Ricardo Macarrón, Enrique Segura or Revello de Toro. I have tried to list the portraits by date, size of the canvases and the cities where I painted them, and I have also included those made in the murals.

### PEPA PORTRAIT

The stain grows, becomes a lily,  
mauve spreads determined to  
create beautiful feminine forms.

Turgid peaks sprout, the  
waist narrows, the  
hips rest on a throne  
of wind.

An arm languishes on its way to the  
serene spot, knee  
to hand, and the color  
of blood rests on the sharp edges that  
end the fingers.

The left extremity is arched with a clear  
vocation of being the  
handle of the amphora that keeps the  
most pleasant treasures of love.

From the shoulders start the paths capable of  
taking us to the landscape of a face  
as beautiful as the love that  
hides among the twists and  
turns of the bun.

The world has left the portrait.

On the other side of the  
brush, Ramón adores Pepa.  
Only the two of them  
know how sweet the kiss is.

(John Calderon)



*Pepa Botella* by Castañer, 1957

DATES PORTRAITS - OIL OILS	CITY
1949 Self-portrait 1949	alcoy
Claudio Juan 1950	
Francisco Moltó	Mut. Alcoy
1950 Conchita Botella	Alcoy "
1950 Pepa Botella	
1950 Luisa Pla (III SEU Medal)	Valencia
1954 Maruchi Mataix de Barrachina	alcoy
1954 Pepa Botella	"
1955 Fina Gisbert de Terol	"
1956 Merce Payá de Sempere	"
1956 Julia Juan	"
1956 Pepa Botella de Castañer	"
1957 Emilia Vilaplana de Martí	"
1957 Amalia Moránt de Pastor	"
1957 Luisa Mataix de Peinado	"
1957 Fina Gisbert de Ter ol	"
1957 Raquel Estrada de Botella	"
1957 Carmen Llopis de Blanes	"
1957 Rafael Blanes Aracil	"
1957 Pepa Botella de Castañer	"
1957 F. José Botella Olcina (child)	"
1957 Consuelo Martí de Monllor	"
1957 Carmen Molines Vos	"
1958 Lolín Romá de Revert	"
1958 M. Francisca Miró, (girl)	"
1958 Pilar Carbonell de Terol	
1958 Carmen Perís de Llácerl	Valencia
1959 Amparo Aguilar de Gisbert	"
1959 Mariola Fluviá, (girl)	alcoy
1959 Julia Juan de Aracil	"
1959 Bernabé Cano, (father)	"
1959 Pepa Botella de Castañer	"
1959 Consuelo Belda	
1959 Guillermina Simón de Reyero	Madrid
1959 American Captain	alcoy
1959 M. Luisa Nebreda de Cortázar	Madrid
Children of José	Valencia
Gisbert 1959 1960 Carmen Donderis, (girl)	Valencia
1960 Elia Miró de Berenguer	alcoy
1961 Mrs. de Betanzos	Barreda
1961 Sta. Betanzos	"
1961 Sta. Arce	Santander
1963 M. Ángeles Irún de Gil Albors	Valencia
1964 Nephew of José Báguena, (child)	"
1965 Mairén Beneyto	"
1965 Alfonso Manglano	
1965 Pepa Botella de Castañer	Madrid
1966 Concha Navarro de Mestre	

MEASUREMENTS 46 cm x 60 73 x 60 56 x 67 56 x 67 92 x



<b>1967</b> Amanda Satorre de Payá	100 x 81	alcoy
<b>1967</b> M. Jesus Payá	100 x 81	"
<b>1967</b> Toya Payá	100 x 81	"
<b>1967</b> Queen in the Floral Games <b>1968</b> María Fe de Quinzá	100 x 81	Valencia
<b>1968</b> rvd. Mr. Juan Blanquer Copoví	100 x 81	"
<b>1968</b> Sta. French <b>1968</b> Sta Martín <b>1971</b>	162 x 130	Santander
Enrique Gutiérrez Ríos <b>1971</b>	73 x 60	Valencia
Mrs. De Aguilar <b>1971</b>	100 x 81	Madrid
Reig de Olcina <b>1972</b> Sol	100 x 81	"
Atienza de Oliveras <b>1976</b> Laura	73 x 60	alcoy
Pérez de Sempere <b>1976</b> Luisa	100 x 81	Madrid
Picó de Sanchis Paqui Value of Pascual <b>1976 1980</b>	100 x 81	alcoy
Carmen Doménech of Moya <b>1981</b> Mrs. Dr. Rodríguez	81 x 65	"
	116 x 73	"
	100 x 81	alcoy

CHARCOAL DRAWINGS		
DATES PORTRAITS	MEASURES	CITY
<b>1950</b> Children of Juan Llácer (3)	55 x 33	Valencia

BLUE GRAPHITE DRAWINGS		
DATES PORTRAITS	MEASURES	CITY
<b>1950</b> Children of Enrique Blay (5)	55x33	Valencia
<b>1951</b> Children of Paco Yacer (5)	55x33	Valencia

CHARCOAL DRAWINGS		
DATES PORTRAITS	MEASURES	CITY
<b>1954</b> Rafael Barrachina	55 x 33	alcoy
<b>1980</b> José Moya children (5)	55x33	"
<b>1983</b> Ramón Castañer Botella	55x33	Madrid
<b>1986</b> Tone Aracil	55x33	alcoy

1958	MURAL OF STA MARIA	ALCOY OILS
	Pius	
	XII Rev. D. Manuel	
	Llopis Juan Tomás (altar boy)	
	Ramón Castañer Segura	
	Pepa Botella	
	Amalia Morant	
	Tito Pastor	
	Antonio Revert	

Iolin rome Aracil Tone julia john Manuel Castaner Safe Marina Raphael Botella Sempere Concha Seguí
<b>1988 MURAL BY D. BOSCO (oil) M. AUXILIADORA</b>
Noemi Pastor Moran Tito Pastor Moran Ramon Castañer Botella
<b>1993 MURAL OF THE FESTIVAL OIL OILS M. AUXILIADORA ALCOY</b>
R. Castañer Botella-(angel) David Aracil-(lantern bearer) Ismael Gisbert-(port. Relic),, Jorge Espí- " J. Ant. Castelló- " " "Miguel Jover- Anto. Revert- (port. Lantern) Juan Pérez-Captain Moro Elvira Anduix- (carriage) María Guillém- "Sara " Monllor- Blanca Monllor- " C. Almuzara " - R. Castañer – (Abencerraje) Carmen Galiana-(blackberry) Javier Rufino- (Aragonese) Javier Cabana- (Montañeses) Camilo Vercet-(Tomasinas) Jacinto Santacreu- (Alcoyanos) Adrián Espí- (Navarros) José Pascual-(Basques) Pedro Guillém-(Labradors) Salvador Pastor-(Cides) Córcoles Ferrándiz-(Asturians) Aznar Blanquer-(Andalusians) D. Ángel del Barrio-(M. Torregrosa) JL Córcoles-(Trowle) Roque Monllor-(Jews) Miguel J. Ivorra-(Domingo Miques) JL Córcoles Ferrándiz-(Chano) José Montava-(Greens) J. Carlos Pérez-(Cordon) Antonio Castelló-(Magenta) Emilio J. Antolí-(Light) Francisco Picó-(Mudejares) José M. Segura-(Marraskesch) Paco Aznar-(Benimerines)

L. Puchades Rufino-(Chano Ant.)  
Elisa Guillém-(masereta)  
J. Córcoles Satorre-(asturianet)  
Juan Rufino-(Tomasina Vieja)  
José Aura-(Cristiano Ensign)  
Antonio Vicedo-(accompanying Lieutenant.)