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LIUBOV POPOVA AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE

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José Joven

Brushswork Beyond Time

1992 - The Year of Spain. Brave men will launch out to sea to trace Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World while facing the same perils as the fifteenth century traveller; sportsmen are poised to battle for gold at the forthcoming Olympic Games in Barcelona; Seville works day and night to prepare for its exhibition...elsewhere a new generation of artists is battling away with palette and brushes, hues and imagination to conjure up remarkable creations in the world of art.

José Joven was born in Aragón, in the province of Zaragoza, but his parents moved to Madrid when José was four. His talent began to manifest itself at an early age: colors fascinated him and he began with landscapes, though he tried his hand at portraits too. Soon friends willingly posed for him.

He joined the *Escuela de Artes Aplicados de Madrid* where he took a number of courses in painting and drawing; at the same time he signed up for a teacher's course at *La Escuela de Magisterio*. After successfully completing these studies he took up painting at the *Facultad de Bellas Artes* in Madrid.

From the beginning he has been involved in the world of education; a stint as a drawing teacher at the *Universidad Autonoma* of Madrid was his first paid job in the art world. Finally, hard work yielded fruit.

"It all happened during the final year at *Bellas Artes*", he says; "My works were selected among others to be shown at the International Fine Arts Exhibition in Bordeaux. I was on cloud nine."

Every morning he gets down to work at his studio. The walls are bare. Not even a photograph - no decoration at all. His eyes and mind are exposed to plain whiteness. The lines, the depth, the perfection in his paintings all stem from a height of concentration.

His works are composed of simple forms such as wheels and circles, and tend to be big (140 x 150 cm.). José prefers to begin with a slowly applied dark coat - no hurried strokes. Miguel Fernández-Cid, the noted critic from *Diario 16* referred to his paintings as "tranquil" and "appearing to depart without any hurry". Coat after coat is laid smoothly until the moment of satisfaction dawns. The artist becomes a magical map maker; his work takes us along paths which reconstruct the fragments of our broken dreams.

Antoni Tàpies, Miró, Picasso, George Baselitz, Cy Towmbly and Anselm Keifer are some of his favorite painters: "I do admire them but don't draw on them for inspiration. My ideas are born when I take a walk in the street."

And why does he draw circles?

"Just three years ago these circular forms came to me like a bolt of lightning. Since then my brush has been "circling" around."

- And do you at times try to change your style?

"I do. Well, it all depends. My mood dictates. Lately I have been using paper on the canvas. There is less white and more colors."

Though his style changes his subjects tend to be the same.

- "What about those crosses? Do they have a religious slant?"

He smiles. "No, not at all. My works are perhaps symbolic."

José's works have hung in prestigious galleries both at home and abroad - Paris, London and Tokyo. He is also quite thrilled about his reception at the Chicago International Art Fair.

"I really did enjoy that one. The American public responded well."

José was also acclaimed in Japan, where he had an individual exhibition at the Art Point gallery in Tokyo. He beams with delight.

"The Japanese are really keen on art. They have a lot of patience. It is a difficult market to break into, unless of course you are one of the top names in art."

In Madrid his works are usually shown at the *Emilio Navarro* gallery.

"It is a wonderful place - an important gallery in the art circles. Young and upcoming painters are encouraged and are making a name in the art world."

Well-known art critic from the ABC newspaper Juan Manuel Bonet has observed that "José Joven brings home the frailty of the morning, a harmony dominating the white, the gray and the ocher. A work stretching beyond time..." And José Joven continues to trap us in his timeless world with his stunning creations.

Deke Mills

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