

## REVIEWS

# José Ruiz

## or the mobility of the body fractured objectivity



BY FRANK GONZÁLEZ

He has just arrived from the capital and he is painting the town red. Forty years separated him from those emigrant Canarian artists of 1955, Millares, Chirino and Padorno, and forty years is a fateful period of time in Francoist Spain that acts like a secret number: he is also twenty years distant from the so called "Generation of the 70's". He is twenty six years old and he has returned to the islands after a spell of eight years in Europe where he developed professionally: Art student in Barcelona, a scholar of the Erasmus Project, he has stayed in Paris, London, Cologne, well before the age Manolo Millares first visited Spain.

The distance that unites him to this Atlantic country is precisely the present, and he confesses simply, with absolute normality, that he is out of touch with the island art scene. His career, with his precocious and voluntary nomadism makes José Ruiz the antithesis of the young artist model in the island. His work, that includes brief notes of object falsification and an uncommon sense of approach to the subject, has been a considerable stimulus for the Canarian art scene. His influences are divided between Susana Solano and García Sevilla, and owe much to Koumellis. He has really started to exhibit his work during the 90's.

Ruiz organizes the marginal parts of the body and territory from the periphery. His work figuratively centres on the

human and animal body. Giraffes, elephants, zebras and birds from the African Savannah mix with the European cow. The cow becomes, through its pictorial development, a true totemic animal, a symbol of fertile femininity and simultaneously of complaisant humanity, of the conveniently civilised and correct human nervous system. His animals and his characters are set on a stage that continually emphasizes the spherical nature of brevity in a manmade world, the incontestable protagonism that stems from the animal and biological colonization of the environment. Humankind, as a species is the agent that blows up and deflates the global

balloon, eating it in the kitchen or flushing it down the toilet. There is no violence. The everyday repetition of representation is the images of attitudes that our species tacitly assumes. The paltry use of colour is significant in this respect, being limited only to the signifying elements, to the message.

Drawing determines the subjects of dialogue, that is, of a decalogue uncounciously shared. A dialogue that eventually develops with the exchange of all parts. Ruiz builds puzzles where six possible solutions in turn solve as many different issues. This game that he devises places the parts of the body in a new and different reality. The rupture of a preestablished order through the individual moves of the parts cancels their own added value. The body is therefore redefined as a structure in permanent mutation and as result, lacking transcendence. Values attached to the head, the genitals, the torso are dissolved in an amalgam of lines that acting like a neuronal mirror returns a conceptual image.

Advantage has disappeared from his pictorial order. In his drawings couples change with every cadence, after each silence. Men and women share in a fabric of heterosexual and homosexual traits where the voices of the animal kingdom are also recorded. In this permanent metamorphosis, the animal adopts human gestures and viceversa. Images of communication generated in





José Ruíz. Cover of Catalogue.

their own territory, independent of the ever changing scenery of immediacy. It is this immersion in the context of the socially correct, as before the ecologically correct, that makes his painting by virtue of its structure, a permanent manual process of dialogue. The spectator who can manipulate the pieces of the puzzle is restructuring some of the premises on which post-industrial society and culture are based. Concept doesn't emerge until manipulation arises. The work becomes a means of communication between two perspectives, the public's and the author's. Metaphor substitutes action.

This subtle play has a past nonetheless. The Campbell Soup tins have cooked in every kitchen of modern Art History, a pressure cooker full of hypermarket on offer foods. The message, thus transvesticised, modulates a new alphabet for a perturbing market of ideologies. The Campbell tins infiltrate the domestic microeconomy through the

back door. In a similar way, the silence that the cubes contain brings back shared experiences almost unconsciously. If Miguel de Unamuno and Agustín Espinosa lead us to the painter Jorge Oramas, and he in turn takes us to the cubic icons of silence and forlornness, the imaginary landscapes of Ruíz, evoke a distant imaginary world, hermetic, yet

closer to its roots than we might originally think. Silence, drawing the lack of a transcendent wish, its structure, conjure a human being that is disconnected, confined by patterns, his body acting as an identity space. Perhaps, as a female American critic said, the only living thing that we have left is the human body.



José Ruíz. Campbell.