



Juan Angel Gonzalez de la Calle born 1956, unlike Chema Cobo, has been almost absent in a political activist sense and continues the Spanish tradition of reference to the Past Masters adding his personal humour and surrealistic visions.

He could almost be considered a classical\_artist, he has an extensive knowledge of traditional painting techniques and styles learnt, not as is common today at art school but, when young as an apprentice in various artists studios.



He is a superb portrait painter as can be seen in this recently

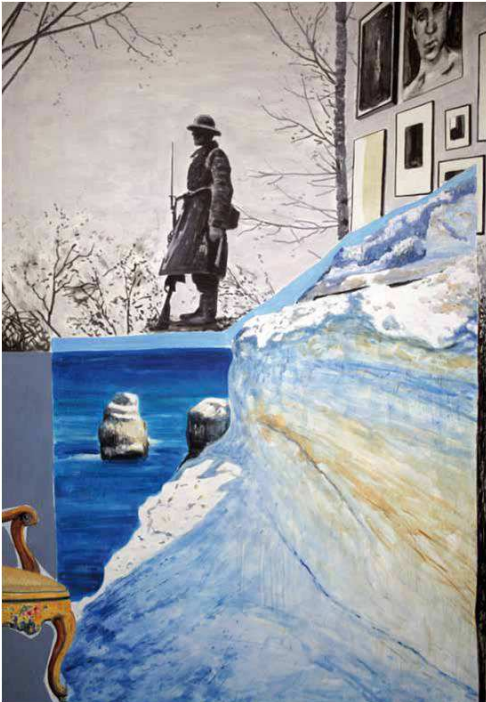
commissioned work of a famous tenor, dressed as the Duke of Mantua, from the opera 'Rigoletto'.



His skills can further be seen in the ongoing series. "Crafts", which to date, consists of 100 small portraits and 6 life-size portraits, and are of Spanish personalities (artists, curators, gallery owners, poets and friends in general) who have each been represented as Catholic saints. Using a mix of black and white photography and chiaroscuro, a technique used in seventeenth century religious paintings he adds religious elements that unify the saint and the person often in an ironic or humorous way.

Its obvious that he enjoys painting, he has a prodigious output, physically his world consists of the few minutes' walk from his home to the studio, traveling further afield only when absolutely necessary to compensate for this he\_uses painting as a tool for psychological exploration of his sub consciousness and the world around him.

What makes JA a contemporary artist is while incorporating the main key points of classical painting (figurative, narrative, technical) he combines them with a questioning view of the contemporary world globalization, urbanism, and banality.



The visual narratives of JA are a mix of the two views, unified by three powerful motors, mystery, humor and a complex feeling that can be best described in German: umheinlich.

This is when something fails in a logical sequence, our mind begins to lose control. The brain does not accept paradoxes and unsolved riddles, to resolve this, the mind repeats over and over again, obsessively, searching for a meaning.

The images in the paintings of Juan Angel, respond to this brain mechanism, creating an iconography which leaves indelible memories on the retina of which we cannot let go, like some dreams.



Grand mothers portrait

For its construction, Juan Angel uses a tool very little used in art today: a sense of humor.

This is a very complex tool, humor serves the artist to shape memories, disrupt platitudes and to emphasize his characters characteristics.

This gives a patina of humour friendly air to all his work and increases, in turn, the rarity and attractiveness of the paintings.

The other contemporary aspect, are the methods he uses to achieve the end result.

His method of working when developing an idea. Is to use every element and technical resource, deposited in the vast store of history and adapt them to the needs of each project,

He investigates an idea through various techniques photography, Photoshop, collage, video, sculpture, installation to exhaustion.



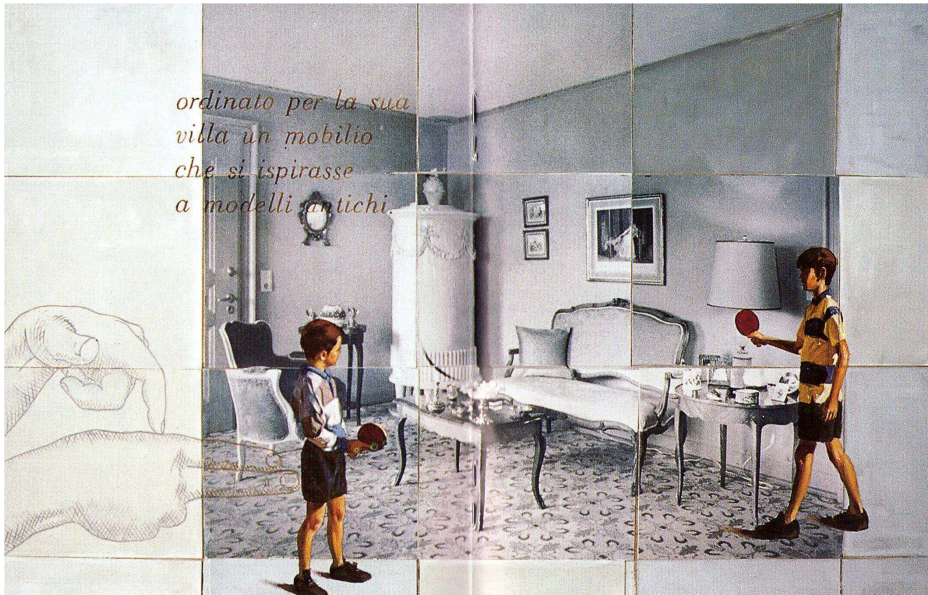
This constant game of construction and destruction are reflected in his workshop, there are hundreds of ideas put on the table, nailed to the walls, riots on the couch ... magazine clippings, photographs, notes, rubber dolls, oils, acrylics, colored sticks, rubber smell, maps, books, glitter and two blue parakeets flying around released from their cage.

When talking about an idea, he does not refer to a concept or message, rather, something he wants to see reflected in the canvas, the image then develops through both an intellectual and instinctive process.



This can typified by the series "Construction Materials" that he started in

1998. In which we can see the repetition of an element that is very important to him. He uses the book as an intellectual and architectural element and also as a part of a child's game.



Childhood seems to be a constant source of inspiration. He looks back and goes into his memory to search for images that have stuck in the subconscious. We find in these paintings, scenes whose elements have been placed like a collage.

Memories without chronological sequence, forming a sort of undecipherable hieroglyphic, like images that occur between waking and sleep. Aesthetic objects, that undoubtedly belong to his childhood and youth, school textbooks, adventure annuals, famous collectable trading cards of the animal world.



In his most recent works he addresses, the last frontiers of contemporary art: the dystopia and meta-art. These two boundaries, like many others, Marcel Duchamp established in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The dystopia (the objects are where they should not be, people living in a landscape that is not theirs) is at the very origin of modern art.

According to Luis Salvador Carulla art critic and psychoanalyst , the few artists who succeed to incorporate successfully the idea of dystopia in their work, use two opposing feelings: horror and laughter.

But Juan Ángel addresses it from a language radically personnel, it sounds familiar and strange at the same time. "The dystopia that he portrays does not produce horror or laughter, but a huge feeling of tenderness, empathy, humanity."

Juan Angel is currently working on two very opposite series.



With "Beasts", Juan Angel's intention, has been to represent individual

animals, in a portrait setting, giving each a personal character . These large paintings are made with very fast and loose brushstrokes and made to be seen from a distance. (some are dangerous)



The other “silence spaces”, goes in search of those landscapes or scenes where there is an empty sound, a dialogue that is imaginary. Natural or architectural subjects appear almost sketch like, leaving the sensation of the work as incomplete, this deliberate intention of J. A. is to include the spectator and draw him in to finish the work, The game of dystopia appear as intellectual and sensory provocation.



One of the most fascinating features of the narrative is the ability to sustain different levels of interpretation. Perhaps what differentiates a



masterpiece apart is the dimension of depth, the existence of several layers below the surface message.

As a painter he takes risks, is disturbing and unique, these three objectives make him an indispensable reference to the current Spanish art scene.