

Curro González (Seville, 1960)

discovered his artistic vocation at a very early age. On a visit to the Prado Museum in **1971** his future dedication to painting was awakened as he encountered, for the first time, *The Triumph of Death*, by Pieter Breugel. He created his first pieces of artwork, entirely self-taught. For these early efforts, González found much of his inspiration in the paintings of Van Gogh and Matisse. From **1978** to **1983**, he studied at the Fine Arts School in Seville, though he completed his degree with difficulty, after discovering quite early on that in terms of artistic teaching and practice, the school had very little to offer him. During these years, which might be considered his 'formative' period, González was heavily influenced by American abstract expressionism and especially the Spanish variant of this movement, pioneered by José Guerrero. In 1981, González traveled to the United States, where he was able to witness, first-hand, the cultural movement that had fascinated him for so long, which he feels is most essentially represented by the paintings of Rothko and Pollock, the writing of Ginsberg and Kerouac, and most of all in the songs of Bob Dylan and the poems of William Carlos Williams. In that same year he participated in an exhibition entitled *Nueva Generación en homenaje a Picasso* (The New Generation Tribute to Picasso), organized by Seville's Contemporary Art museum. From that point on González's work began to appear on a regular basis in galleries and various corporate exhibition spaces. In **1982** his work was included in the exhibition *Pintores de Andalucía* (Andalusian Painters), Fine Arts Museum of Bilbao, and he was also given two solo shows in Seville: one at the Imagen Múltiple gallery and the other at the Caja de Ahorros San Fernando, as a finalist -and ultimately, the winner- of the Young Artists' Competition.

In **1983** he obtained a grant for creative assistance from the Ministry of Culture, and the Fúcares Gallery became his exclusive representative; this marked the beginning of a relationship that would last for ten years. In the autumn of **1984** the magazine *Figura* (to whose inaugural issue he had contributed) ran an interview in which González stated he was moving away from abstraction because he had grown interested in a new kind of narrative focus and in issues relating to the question of visual perception.

In **1985** art critic Kevin Power selected him to participate in the exhibition *Cota cero*, a comprehensive show that featured a broad view of contemporary Spanish artistic creation at that time. The mid-80s marked the turning point, an explosion of sorts, of the younger generation of artists in Seville, most of whom were connected to the above-mentioned magazine *Figura*. During those years González's work was featured in a number of individual exhibitions: in Palma de Mallorca (Galería 4 gats), Almagro (Galería Fúcares), Valencia (Galería Val i 30), Seville (Galería La Máquina Española), Lisbon (Galería Cómicos), and Barcelona (Galería Ciento), and he also participated in a number of group exhibitions such as *Ciudad Invadida* (Invaded City) Contemporary Art Museum of Seville; *Un palacio dentro de otro* (One palace inside the other), at the Municipal Museum in Santander; the Third Drawing Triennial in Nuremberg; and *Andalucía Pinturas* (Andalusian Painting) in Antwerp. During these years, his work went through a process of reflection that led him to strengthen his convictions regarding the idea of a pictorial language independent of artistic style, and this attitude became patent through the increasingly important role of drawing in his oeuvre at this time. In a general sense, his work became more and more intimate, inching ever closer to the world of poetry. It was during this time that he also began working more with series as a way of finding a voice for the narrative tensions and the problems of language that interested him at the time. These preoccupations found their way into works such as *Atlas* and *La herida* (The wound) (**1987**) as well as broader-format series such as *La habitación de al lado* (The room next door) and *Hacia el final de la jornada* (Toward the end of the work day), both of which were exhibited at the Galería Fúcares (Madrid) in **1988**, and *Eldescenso* (The descent), which was inspired by a William Carlos Williams poem and exhibited at the Sofía Ungers Gallery (Cologne, **1990**), in the group show *90 a.s.o.* (Auvers-sur-Oise) and finally in its entirety at the Sala Robayera (Miengo, Cantabria, **1994**). The themes of these pieces -birth and death- brought González's work to a turning point that made him feel the need to establish some kind of distance between himself and his work.

Between **1990** and **1995**, he completed several self-portraits which employed a kind of caricature, as in the series *El Banquete* (The Banquet), that suggested a shift toward a more marginal artistic language, parodying the themes that previously had seemed extremely transcendent. He also began to work in formats that closely resembled the ornamental arts, in an effort to transmit messages with critical content, and he even began to recover the tradition of kitsch, as seen in his series of glass-jar portraits of friends and fellow artists, which he created for the exhibition *El artista y la ciudad* (The artist and the city), held in Seville in **1992**. At this time, the influence of the Baroque became more and more evident in his work, and his adaptations of this tradition can be seen, for example, in his interest for certain themes related to the *vanitas*, though he viewed them from a clearly secular perspective that he complemented with a healthy dose of humor. At Salas del Arenal in Seville.

In **1995**, González presented a collection of pieces under the title *Doble dirección* (Double direction) dealing with these specific issues. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue of the same title, with texts by the artist as well as several art critics. Some of the works in this show clearly reveal the author's

admiration for the work of his beloved Breugel –*La cocina del pobre* (The poor man's kitchen), *El pez grande se come al pequeño*, etc (The big fish eats the little one), to give two examples- as well as his desire to cast a critical eye toward politics, society, and contemporary mores. This series of work reached its culmination a year later with the exhibition *El mundo cabeza abajo* (The world upside-down) (Galería Fernando Latorre, Zaragoza). From 1996 through the end of the decade, González's work explored his interest in subjects like memory and its relationship with the hermetic philosophies of Giordano Bruno (the paradigm of marginal and heterodox response-interpretation), and language and the viability of hermeneutics. In **1997**, the results of these reflections were exhibited in the shows *Soñando Babel* (Dreaming of Babel) (Galería Joan Prats, Barcelona), *Al margen de Giordano Bruno* (At the margins of Giordano Bruno) (Galería Tomás March, Valencia) and, the following year, in *Laberinto de fortuna* (Labyrinth of fortune) (Galería Xavier Fiol, Palma de Mallorca) and *Un palacio sin puertas* (A palace without doors) (Galería Windsor Kulturgintza, Bilbao). +These are works that explore linguistic themes, such as the meaning of identity, and the selection or determination of the elements that communicate meaning in the face of a reality that is fragmentary and short on reference points, and the confrontation between language and the hierarchy that emerges from history, culture, civilization (the gaze). These are pieces that have been heavily influenced by the Baroque world of allegory and emblem, which confirm and document that same dispersion of identity; they are works that represent an order that has been most definitively and perhaps irrevocably lost, and which suggest the path of fantasy and memory as the only possibility for recomposition or rediscovery. This was also the guiding principle for the exhibitions *The Gaslighter's Nightmare* (Galería Tomás March, Valencia **1999**), *Trayéndolo todo a casa* (Bringing it all back home) (Galería Rafael Ortiz, Seville, **2000**), and *Strange Fruit* (Galería Joan Prats, Barcelona **2001**), as well as the works exhibited in *Les chiens andalous* (Track16 Gallery, Santa Monica, California). For this last show, González inserted his own self-portrait into his pieces, almost like an actor playing a role in his own work.

The pictorial technique took shape through the use of nuanced colour and a matte finish, which permitted a wide range of effects, and also made it ideal for large-format pieces. The exhibitions entitled *Party Final* (Last party)(Galería Fernando Latorre, Zaragoza **2002**), [Parada melancólica](#) (Melancholy parade) (Galería Tomás March, Valencia, **2002**) and [Deja que el futuro pase de largo](#) (Let the future pass us by)(Galería Alfredo Viñas, Málaga **2003**) propose a reflection on consumer society, the contemporary notion of culture as a spectacle, and the artificial, canned joy of the new leisure rituals, the most genuine exemplars of which are the creations commonly known as 'theme parks,' frequently built in the image and likeness of Disneyland, the original model of them all. These pieces reveal how very deeply the United States, with its own, very particular brand of 'civilization,' has been able to influence and even contaminate our view of the world in this modern age. The US is, very naturally, the principal motor and promoter behind the ideals and forms that preside over this liturgy of triumphant capitalism

. In his more recent work, such as the pieces included in the exhibition [La herida](#) (The wound) (Galería Distrito 4, Madrid), González complements his critical view of this throwaway culture with his constant reiteration of his belief that we must always be conscious of the fleeting nature of our existence –the wound of time-, and with this in mind he re-formulates the Baroque theme of the *vanitas* with a contemporary vision that forces us to confront the deep apprehension we inevitably feel when we come face to face with this irrefutable reality.