

## **Baltasar Garzón puts questions to Rita Martorell**

### **1- Were you born an artist or did you become one?**

I think each concept complements the other. In my case, essentially because I was born an artist, I would say that in my childhood I appreciated instinctively the readiness and spontaneity to draw and colour and the ability to visualise and transmit perspective on to paper without being conscious of it. Becoming an artist is an unconscious act, there is no resolve to dedicate yourself to art, it's a feeling. It's true that I was brought up in an encouraging environment, as my mother applied herself to painting, but frankly this is not the key to becoming an artist, rather there exists an inner feeling of emotion for art. Nevertheless, I also believe in the possibility that a person is born an artist but does not develop the skill, or that someone becomes an artist without really being one.

### **2- When did you create your first work?**

Well, from my point of view, to create is a natural and spontaneously dynamic act, rather like the cry of a new-born baby when it senses it has to breathe on its own. At times an artist feels the same compulsion for self-acclamation through art, in the same natural way. I cannot tell you the first time I actually created something, but I can say that art forms part of my life.

### **3- As an artist, do you prefer smiles or tears?**

I am a great optimist and I like smiling at everything, so it's difficult for me as a rule to imagine tears. As a person and creative artist, I believe in the balance of unity of opposites. For example, nothing and no-one is either perfect or imperfect and this is what forms part of beauty, of thinking or of aesthetics. So, neither smiles nor tears, but a feeling that one thing would not make any sense without the other. One of my works is entitled '*Pain is Necessary to Appreciate Joy*'.

### **4-Is it possible to create a good piece of work without establishing synergy with the subject of a portrait?**

It is possible to create a good piece of work under many different circumstances. Occasionally, even if there is scarcely no time to go into depth or empathise with my sitters, if their personality or their nature stirs feelings inside me then I can easily transmit their features and create a special composition for their portrait. Synergy does not always result in the best portrait; personal challenge is very important.

### **5- Do you have any talisman you cannot do without when you are creating?**

My talisman is the unconditional confidence I feel in myself when creating. I am a fighter

and a non-conformist and every work, every portrait, is a battle I intend to win.

**6- Have you ever felt the need to paint the portrait of someone you didn't even know? For example, a person you happen to have met in a cafeteria or on the train?**

Without a doubt there are moments when you come across a stranger unexpectedly in some setting who you feel could be the subject of a theme you would like to reflect.

Other times I have by chance been in an unusual situation such as when I was on a train journey and was sitting next to the singer-songwriter Joan Améric. I knew his music well and recognised him by his voice and decided would like to paint his portrait.

On another occasion I met the dancer Rafael Amargo in the lift of the hotel where I was staying and at that moment, because of the tattoos he had on his arms, I decided he would form part of my series of works entitled 'Live Your Dreams'.

**7- Based on your experience, what do you think makes someone agree to having their portrait painted?**

I believe there are various influencing factors when it is someone well-known. He or she may agree to being painted because they consider that there will be some proof of recognition reflected in the portrait. Sometimes it may even be a commission from an institution, as happened with the portrait of G. Fernandez Albor now forming part of the gallery of well-known figures of the German Parliament in recognition of him having helped to re-unify Germany. It is also possible that a public figure decides to have his or her portrait done so as to donate it to a charitable cause. This was the proposal put to me by Samuel Eto'o and, as quoted in the Marca newspaper: "he decided to auction himself. That is, turned into a work of art". It was done to raise funds to construct a paediatric hospital in Cameroon.

Obviously there are many other reasons why people decide to have their portrait painted. It could be the collector who wants his portrait to hang in an ancestral gallery, or egotism, eccentricity, vanity, sensitivity or curiosity.

**8- Which of your sitter's features are the most important for you?**

The look in the eyes; I believe this is considered to be very important in a portrait. Without a doubt it is a very prominent feature. Many times the eyes are my starting point when I begin a portrait. It's as if all the force of expression of a face comes from the eyes. That's how I feel it. Likewise, the hands can have a lot of symbolism and their arrangement can affect the posture.

**9- How do you manage to convey the soul and the feelings of your sitter to a portrait?**

With brushstrokes and colour I try to reveal everything a person conveys to me. When I create portraits, I always prefer live models in order to capture at close quarters all their expressions and movements and also their inner self through their gaze.

**10- I can see a dominant colour in each of your portraits. Where does it come from?**

Despite never deciding beforehand on the colours I will use in a portrait, when I begin a work I feel intuitively which colours I should use according to how I see the model. It's an automatic perceptive process. And it's true that when a work is finished there can be a dominant colour, possibly due to the multiple factors involved during the process of creating the portrait. It could be the ambient light, the colour of the dress, or even the position of the sitter that can determine a colour on the canvas.

**11- My attention is caught by the magnificence of the hands in many of your works. What does this signify for you?**

Every time I produce a portrait, I like to shake off the idea of it being a portrait and become conscious that it could be any given subject, so as to have the freedom to represent it my own individual way. This is why there was a time when I treated hands as masses of blurred colours, which were balanced with the rest of the work by their size, by their colour and their form. Effectively though, the gesture of a hand has as much force as the look in the eyes.

**12- When you are immersed in a project, do you think of the future observer of the work?**

When I am working on a piece everything I do has a meaning and therefore I always think that what I want to transmit is aimed at the public eye. When it is a question of a portrait, even though the sitter is the essence of the composition, I do not take it into account as a future observer.

**13- Have you ever included a hidden message in your work?**

I think mystery should exist in a work. It should be full of thoughts and hidden messages.

**14- Are you superstitious?**

Life is too magical for us to dwell on superstitions.

**15- How do you take criticism?**

Criticism is the greatest value you can be offered as you always discover or learn something of yourself.

**16- What advice would you give to young painters beginning on their artistic journey?**

I would advise discipline, that they uphold their own personality, that they set goals in their career and that they let all the great artists and history permeate their beings.

**17- Do you ever feel incapable of finishing any portrait you have already started?**

No, never, I always finish it. I know perfectly well that when working with public figures it can at times be difficult to co-ordinate sittings, but I think that the degree of involvement I have obtained from well-known personalities has been the greatest means of achieving good results.

**18- Up to what point can a particular social, political or economic context influence an artist at the time of facing a professional challenge?**

The influence is considerable. I think nowadays the romantic idea of artists isolated in their studios has faded. Artists have to socialise more than ever in order to sell their image as well as their works and to enter the market so as to be more in demand. Everything is more strategic now I believe. It is true that a favourable social, political or economic context is a determining factor when it comes to having support in projects that help promote a work. You have to try to be in the right place at the right time for opportunities to arise that lead to professional success.

**19- With what basic brushstrokes would you draw the concept of Justice?**

Personally, I would like to draw or interpret the term 'justice' based on the concept of social justice and human rights. I believe that this is the most important struggle within so many injustices in the world.

**20- Having arrived at this point ... in your artist's eye, what is it in me you have wanted to translate onto canvas?**

I consider you as a person who has left a profound mark on our society and that your presence, despite being high-profile which could be something trivial, reaches out beyond the

day-to-day. It is for these reasons I have wanted to convey a more penetrating vision of Judge Garzón, determining your role by means of the symbol of a toga in which you appear enveloped and centred in the composition of the portrait.

**Baltasar Garzón Real**

**Lawyer**