

The Purpose of Painting is to Reflect the Spiritual, the Ineffable

Caceres, Spain, November 17, 1993 | *Diario Hoy* by Juan Domingo Fernandez

Halfway through this past June, Tom Block decided that the moment had arrived to settle the doubt in his private creative challenge and put on a solo exhibition for the first time, here in Caceres. This was in the public library, showing a collection of medium sized paintings using a variety of techniques that created an original voice, radical within the stagnant artistic panorama.

Now, less than half a year later, the thirty year-old American, admirer of Bacon and Giacometti who broke away from journalism to submerge himself in this other absorbing whirlwind has decided to bring his latest work together in an exhibition entitled *Paintings from the In- Between Place*, with twelve oil paintings.

Tom Block confesses to being gripped by an unbreakable creative passion. "I'm painting a great deal; more than ever," he says. All of the work in the show has been painted between the months of February and October and offers stronger, more vibrant colors, fruit of his development towards a stage that is, in his words, more visually aggressive, with objects and figures that are less labyrinthine, less tormented.

As well as being difficult, it must also be traumatic to disassociate living experience from creative experience. But in the case of this American painter, as he himself confesses, these two trajectories follow divergent paths.

While his life in the last four or five years has been quite eventful with stays in Washington D.C., Boston, four months traveling around Europe and the Middle East for professional reasons and then again in the United States, in Denver, Colorado, before finally settling in Caceres his art has escaped the effects of this disturbing "to-ing" and 'fro-ing" and has followed an almost uniform, straight path as if it had been created far from the higgledy-piggledy journeying of its author.

He is thinking of staying in Caceres for another couple of years or so, provided that he doesn't encounter visa problems. For this artist, Caceres represents a distance from the United States, a positive atmosphere. "I'm here to get away from all of the activity, from the 'circus' with thousands of artists screaming at the top of their lungs, yet with nothing new or constructive to say. Here, I can live apart, hear myself think. Maybe someday I will be successful enough to enter the big-city art world, but right now I just want a quiet place to get my thoughts together."

The purpose of art is very important to this artist. His theory difficult to sum up in a few words is that up until a short time ago, art was inseparably bound to the spiritual and served, above all, "to express things of the spirit, the ineffable that which can't be expressed in words. Art has always been inextricably linked with the spirit in whichever era of man's history," he says. "Recently it has slipped out of context. Working as I do, with an eye to art history's past, I can't believe that with my art I am 'screaming,' that I can 'change things.' I feel that I am merely sighing.

Juan Domingo Fernandez, Caceres, Spain, November 17, 1993