



## Artur Heras' Serene yet Vibrant Art

Josep Salvador

Artur Heras is one of the most remarkable European artists of the last few decades. His contribution to modernising Valencian arts and crafts has been based on his constant dialogue with the history of art and his links to the international art scene. His work underwent a formal renewal in the 1960s, as did that of other leaders in the Valencian arts and crafts scene forming part of the *Crònica de la realitat* movement. In doing so, he helped open a window on a wider, more heterodox world beyond the narrow mental confines of Franco's Spain.

Since then, Heras has audaciously pursued many paths in his own personal exploration of art. As befitting an artistic genius, he touches on the myriad facets of human experience. Moreover, his career provides the key to understanding the trends in Valencian art over the last few decades. Heras played the role of cultural agitator during his spell as Art Director of the Sala Parpalló art centre and at other spaces in the city of Valencia during Spain's transition to democracy. He created a fine, incisive iconography which has brought various

aspects of Valencian culture and history up to date. Together with Manuel Boix and Rafael Armengol, he blazed his own trail in Valencia in the 1960s, with his original proposals forming part of his *Estampa Popular*, *Equipo Crònica* and *Equipo Realidad* cycles.

He has retained his individual style, in which the figurative languages are enriched with textures and material elements. Heras' unique approach to Pop Art incorporated neo-Dadaist objects and graphic elements which, once decontextualised, took on a new meaning and power to evoke an ever-changing reality. The semantic possibilities of the chosen objects — paintings, the canvas itself, envelopes, numbers and letters — were underscored by irony and a critical representation of the fiction that forms an inextricable part of artistic creation. Heras' artistic universe draws on knowledge of the impact of advertising images through 3-D *trompe l'oeil* effects. This line of experiment was complemented by Heras' sculptural side, in which the artist shows remarkable powers of expression.



In this field, there is a subtle recreation of the metaphoric power of certain signs and elements of popular culture that are stripped of their anecdotic features to stress other more quintessential and formal features.

Heras' work has since moved on to other themes, leading the artist to review some of the schools and figures that shaped contemporary Western Culture (Cubism, the Bauhaus, Soviet Art - Tatlin, and the literature of Hemingway, Kafka, and Pavese). In the process, it has provided a rich source of inspiration with which to analyse contemporary symbols with intellectual rigour and irony. The elegance of his forms, artistic treatment, and mastery of colour all stem from the artist's deep knowledge of Pop Art, Surrealism, and Realism, giving rise to a uniquely personal synthesis. Heras' painting and sculpture and his work as an illustrator and graphic artist have always been pure, direct, and spontaneous, the result of a careful treatment of themes and concepts that take us into a mysterious, complex universe. Heras' exhibitions of

his work has picked up of late (*Despulses*, Fundació Bancaixa de València, 2000; *Hotel Ambos Mundos*, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona, 2001; [A-C] galeria Àmbit, Barcelona 2004; *L'evidence éternelle*, Perpignan Centre of Contemporary Art, 2005; *L'éternel combat*, Galerie S. Laurent, Paris; *Passatges - De la torre de Tatlin a Lavorare stanca de Pavese*, Galeria pazYcomedias, Valencia 2006), charting the artist's work since the 1970s up until the present day and capturing the vibrant yet serene nature of Heras' oeuvre.

The work in this second edition of **Transfer** magazine is a sample of Heras' most recent output ||