

Joan de Palau Buxó (1919-1991)

Landscape painter of excellence of Banyoles with many pencil and oil drawings, watercolours and gouache that represent this environment. Grandson of the notary of Banyoles, Antoni de Palau, and son of railway engineer Ramon de Palau who worked as a topographer for the MZA railroad company, and of Antònia Buxó. Joan was born in Flaçà on the 20th of July 1919, and following the professional path of his father resided firstly in Zaragoza and later in Aranjuez, where he studied at the school of the Jesuits of Saint Ferdinand. It was during these years, specifically the year 1931 when he met painter Santiago Rusiñol in the royal gardens of the castilian city, the gardens in which at the age of 14 he made his first painting.

Once his elementary education was finished, Joan moved to Madrid where he studied the baccalaureate at the San Isidro High school, during which time he took the opportunity to visit the Prado museum rooms whenever he could. But the social deterioration and military climate which the state capital breathed caused the family to return to Catalunya, settling with his parents first in Badalona and later in Granollers. It was in Granollers that he was mobilized in 1938 and joined the Republican Front of the Pyrenees, where he was assigned to meteorological services.

When the conflagration ended, Joan was summoned to the front line, completing his military services at the barracks of La Maestranza in Sant Andreu de Palomar, where he spent little over a year. During this time he made various portraits, murals of military themes and posters for Saint Barbara, patroness of Artillery.

At some point of this second decade of the thirties, he began his architectural studies, but either due to the war or lack of motivation, he quit. Not so his passion for painting, so much so that during these years he began to fully emerge in this world: in 1940 he won the Gold Medal of the Barcelona City painting contest and in 1941 gained first prize in the Granollers City contest, exhibiting his paintings for the first time in the year 1944 at the Syra gallery of Barcelona.

It was also during these years that Joan began to take frequent trips to Banyoles, where various family members were living and where he had spent the summer before the war, until the year 1946 during which time he married Montserrat Juncà Comerma on the 19th of July and settled permanently, integrating himself fully in the artistic and cultural fabric of the city.

In the same year he exhibited at the La Caixa hall of Banyoles, and began to collaborate with the magazine Horizontes, as an art critic and caricaturist, and in the following year became part of the Board of Trustees of the Lake, substituting Manuel Pigem Ras.

It could be said the decade of the 1950s was the decade of Joan's consolidation. In 1950, the same year that they granted him Gold medal from the Diputació de Girona, he began commercial relations with various art dealers who exported his works to the continent of America. It was also during this decade that he began to work as a teacher in the Banyoles School of Arts and Crafts, a period that marked several Banyolí painters, such as painter Lluís Roura who still remembers the pedagogical style employed by De Palau. "Joan didn't teach you but advised you, guided you".

From then on, Joan's works travelled to art galleries everywhere. The Pino Hall of Barcelona (1951); the Exposition Hall of La Caixa in Banyoles, together with Esteve Juncà (1952), the Rovira Hall of Barcelona (1954), the Municipal Hall of Girona (1956); the Mercantile Circle of Igualada (1957), the Municipal Hall of Arbúcies (1958) -the same year his paintings crossed borders and could be seen in art halls in Caracas (Venezuela), Perpignan (France) and Geneva (Switzerland), and so on during four decades.

In 1961 he began to paint the scenery for the Passion that was to be represented in Banyoles, a work by Frederic Corominas entitled "Ecce Homo. The hour of Christ". He also created various posters for the Festa Major de Banyoles and in 1979 he inaugurated a drawing school in his own workshop in the main square "the art workshops of Can Palau" that is still to this day managed by his sons.

De Palau died in Banyoles on the 7th of May 1991.