

VENANCIO MEETS YOUNG ARTISTS

Monday, May 20, 2013

On Saturday, May 18, Francisco Blanco, a member of the Patrons of the Venancio Blanco Foundation, summoned a group of young artists who met with Venancio to celebrate his 90th birthday. Together, they spoke of sculpture, drawing, dance, music – art.

In the world of art, to speak of Venancio is to speak of an institution. The sculptor, Venancio Blanco, a teacher with a long and great experience in contemporary sculpture, a professor at the University School of Art, the director of the Academy of Spain in Rome, an honored academic of San Fernando Academy, sculptor of the greatest collection of religious sculpture of the last fifty years not only in our country, and is the only person who has a personal museum of religious pieces – the Mapfre Foundation's Venancio Blanco Museum of Religious Sculpture.

Standing before the young students and his latest work of a large resurrected figure, and prepared to cast, the teacher gave a lesson on materials, the way to make the piece – and especially drawing. "Without drawing, there is nothing in art, obviously. Drawing sets, focuses, establishes, organizes, and generates ideas. The idea is a whim; drawing is knowledge. I dance; I dance with the shapes, turning them over until we become an inseparable pair - and, we dance in a dance enriched by religion."

From a fruitful career, the teacher explained and asked, both jokingly and seriously, as he recalled his childhood: "The fields of Salamanca taught me impressionism, nature, and, from the harmonica of my blind friend, Remigio, was my first music. Then, came Bach and blackbirds. My father, who saw that I was not for working the fields, gave me the only thing that he could give me: the freedom of choice."

In a profound silence, the master, swaying but nevertheless standing firm, shared his experiences, doubts, mistakes, successes, feelings, commitment, his life as a sculptor, his difficult and joyful life to the group of young people: Rocío Guerrero, Javier de Benito, Albano, Peño, José Luis Cremades, Beatriz

Aymat, Marcos Lozano, Helena Fernandez, Carlos Cartaxo, Marta MaloVictor Alba, M. Lourdes Castro, Irene Cruz, Diana Garcia Roy and Leo Garcia.

And Venancio, with his beret, on a wintery day in spring, continued: "Drawing is everything for the artist – and, his craft. Without craftsmanship there is no taste to be a sculptor. Religious experience is lucidity, and is an inner light that guides you. But without drawing, you cannot go anywhere. The line is a mandate from Nature." And the master, softly and harmoniously, lifted his hand and, as if he held a pencil or a sanguine , drew with strokes of a silhouette in the air of a lying figure trying to rise.

We moved to another room in the studio and he showed everybody his "Christ Reclining ", made of pinewood, and a tribute to his brother **Juan** . He continued; "Spirituality: There is substance and craftwork, but that is not enough. You have to find the emotion, the feeling, that strength that a work transmits." And he continued with music, explaining how he had conceived and developed his sculpture entitled, "Beethoven's Ninth": "A vertical plane for the first movement rises as if in flight, then becomes somewhat tranquil with a horizontal rhythm, and the allegro follows with the development and construction of the magic of a dazzling world. And you are left with, and carried by serving the idea of the Creator, and Beethoven – something wonderful – that can't be done, without your craft, without drawing, without thinking, without feeling, without joy, without the giving, without the pursuit of a dream, without your true self."

Finally, Venancio handed each a signed monotype which he had made for the occasion. And after a photo of the group under his magnolia tree frequented by blackbirds, there was peace and glory and that was that. I witnessed those singular moments of the great sculptor transmitting to young people his exaltation and hardships, his fears and joys, his fascination and quests, his devotion and naturalness. And, some of Peño's explanations about the behavior of matter. And other young students, more timid or more surprised by this grand meeting, with the sound of rain.

Tomás Paredes

President, Spanish Art Critics Association