



the
A L V A R
update

A VISIT TO ALVAR'S STUDIO



Alvar Suñol's home studio in Costa Brava, Spain is an enchanting space full of rich history and nostalgic significances. The eighteenth century stone home sits on a hillside lot and reminds Alvar of the beauty of Spain. Alvar paints with the natural light that filters through a large window that faces the verdant garden to the west. Within the studio are canvases, boards, and tubes of paint sprawled about to show that the artist is always at work, that the organized chaos is part of his creative process. Over the last few years, Alvar has transitioned from his signature lithograph process to large-scale canvases and board paintings that encompass a variety of subjects, ranging from ethereal interiors to biblical narratives.

In whichever subject Alvar chooses, his home and studio play an important role within his work. The contrast of the interior and exterior within his paintings can be likened to the contrast of the interior and exterior of his home studio. The interior is a harmonious space riddled with creative triggers: the hour of the clock, paintings by his favorite artists hanging on the walls, a variety of art history textbooks, the dining room table or living room console, and even technological devices such as a microwave or Macbook. These everyday objects find their way into Alvar's work and reiterate the fact that for Alvar art and life are one in the same. He is not able to decipher where art ends and when life begins or vice versa, because for Alvar, art is life. The exterior of his studio represents the endless bounty of beauty and inspiration that have beckoned artists for centuries. The exterior world, with its architecture, verdure, and natural light appears in his work to show that meaning, metaphor, and creativity does not only exist within the studio space but everywhere.



MUSEUMS & PERMANENT COLLECTIONS



Alvar at the Appleton Museum of Art



Alvar at the Georgia Museum of Art



Alvar's *Cena de Emaus II* at Liberty University



Alvar exhibition at the Museum of Biblical Arts, Dallas, TX

Albany Museum of Art (Albany, GA)
 Appleton Museum of Art (Ocala, FL)
 Art Center at La Jolla (La Jolla, CA)
 Casa de Cultura (Girona, Spain)
 Casa-Museo de Goya (Fuendetodos, Spain)
 Centro Cultural Ibercaja (Guadalajara, Spain)
 Col·lecció del Banc de Sabadell (Sabadell, Spain)
 Finch College (New York, NY)
 Fukuoka Museum (Fukuoka, Japan)
 Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA)
 Glassboro State College (Glassboro, NJ)
 Huellas en el Tiempo (Logroño, Spain)
 Instituto Cervantes (Bordeaux and Toulouse, France)
 Jamestown College (Jamestown, ND)
 Kumamoto Museum (Kumamoto, Japan)
 Liberty University (Lynchburg, VA)
 Musée Hyacinthe Rigaud (Perpignan, France)
 Museo de Dibujo Julio Gavín (Osca, Spain)
 Museo del Grabado (Zaragoza, Spain)
 Museo del Grabado Contemporáneo (Marbella, Spain)
 Museu de Badalona (Badalona, Spain)
 Museu Europeu d'Art Modern (Barcelona, Spain)
 Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (Barcelona, Spain)
 Museum of Biblical Arts (Dallas, TX)
 Utah Museum of Fine Art (Salt Lake City, UT)
 Wichita Art Museum (Wichita, KS)

PUBLIC COMMISSIONS



Pau Casals
 Boulogne Billancourt
 Paris, France



The Four Seasons mural
 The Four Seasons Bldg.
 Tiana, Spain



Mediterranea
 Plaza de Mallorquines
 Barcelona, Spain

"[The Pau Casals] sculpture has been such a challenge for me, because Casals, in spite of his universality, knew how to conserve his own identity at all times. The sculpture represents, in its form and size, the essence of this great musician and composer, his art and his emotion." -Alvar, 2008

ALVAR'S EXPLORATION OF BIBLICAL THEMES

One of the greatest lessons that Alvar aims to portray in his paintings is the importance of art history to contemporary art. He states,

I want a rebirth of *oficio*, of craft, a rebirth of skill and know-how, a rebirth of the traditional artistic values that the great artists have bequeathed to us. We are forgetting them. We are wasting them. And we should not. The appreciation of those values is what I want to transmit pictorially in my painting.

Thus, it is not surprising, but almost a natural phenomenon that we see Alvar exploring biblical themes as a way to pay homage to the past while also questioning the role of an artist as both a personal choice and divine designation.

In *Los Discipulos de Emaus* (*The Disciples of Emmaus*) (Fig. 1), 2014, Alvar recounts the biblical story, known as the Supper at Emmaus, in which two traveling disciples who, overcome with sadness over the death of Jesus, invite a stranger to dine with them. Alvar's use of iconography allows viewers to "read" his paintings in a similar manner to aesthetic values established in the Italian Renaissance. The white lily of the Annunciation, and the egg, a reference to Piero della Francesca's *Brera Altarpiece*, 1472, are symbolic of the stages of Jesus's life and the art historical tradition of biblical representation. However, this work is very much an Alvar both in setting and in the likeness of the figures, among a number of other similarities. Via the precedent set by past artists, Alvar is able to redefine biblical themes within a contemporary context.

Alvar's paintings *Esther* (Fig. 2), 2014, and *Samson and Delilah* (Fig. 3), 2014, are other examples of Alvar's re-presentation of biblical traditions. *Samson and Delilah* was modeled after Peter Paul Rubens painting from 1609. *Esther* contains a drawing of Alvar's own painting *Moses Crossing the Red Sea*, 2012 (currently at the MBA, Dallas, TX). By reinterpreting biblical themes, Alvar inserts his work within the traditions established by his favorite artists, Piero della Francesca, Rubens, Van Gogh, Picasso, et al., and redefines what it means to be a contemporary artist.



Fig. 3. *Samson and Delilah*, Oil on Canvas, 45" x 45"



Fig. 2. *Esther*, Oil on Canvas, 20" x 28"



Fig. 1. *Los Discipulos de Emaus*, Oil on Canvas, 38" x 51"

MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ARTS

Located in the heart of Dallas, the Museum of Biblical Arts (MBA) hosts an extraordinary collection of biblical-themed works. Focusing on all denominations with an emphasis in art history, their collection has added the religious-themed works of Alvar to their repertoire.

Scott Peck, Co-Director and Curator of the MBA, enjoys having substantial pieces by Spain's foremost living artist in his museum. Peck states, "We are truly excited to have such a unique and well-respected artist, whose previous work has included biblical-themed pieces, represented in our museum. [His work] captures a significant moment in religious history and preserves the imagery for which he is known."



Alvar's installation of *Jesus in the Temple*, Oil on Canvas, 78" x 118"



Alvar visits with Scott Peck and the staff of the MBA

COLLECTING ALVAR

VARIOUS MEDIUMS

SCULPTURES



WATERCOLORS



DRAWINGS



OIL ON CANVAS



OIL ON BOARD WITH DRAWING



LITHOGRAPHS

Open Lithograph Editions:

**Concierto en las Horas del Día Suite* (4)

(Collector's Edition)

**Suite Musical* (2)

**Suite Maternitat I* (2)

La Pintora Mexicana
Les Portadors de Natures
Les Muses de l'Artista
Blava Taula Mexicana
Homenaje a Pau Casals

*Most lithographs in Suite are available for individual purchase.

Alvar's long-time recognition in the art world elevates any art collection whether it is a beginner or seasoned collector's portfolio. Alvar's greatest gift is the myriad of mediums he works within, providing a broad audience the opportunity to own one of his works.

For any collection, an Alvar lithograph is an ideal starting point. Alvar is recognized as one of the foremost lithographers of our time. He began his career in lithography and has since mastered the technique, resulting in high-quality collectible works. In addition, most of his lithographs are hand-embossed and hand-remarked either in watercolor or pencil, making each piece an "original."



La Pintora Mexicana,
Lithograph, 22" x 29"



Homenaje a Pau Casals,
Lithograph, 26" x 20"

Within recent years, Alvar's concentration has been on creating a masterful body of original oils, many of which have found themselves in museums or private collections. Within these paintings, Alvar works with multiple layers and textures of paint to enhance the physical presence of the work. Alvar states, "Time does not pardon what has been made without it." In some of his most recent board paintings, Alvar has often included drawings, as for Alvar, drawing is a skill that all artists should have. With these works, Alvar reiterates his aesthetic values and displays the craftsmanship that is evident in everything he creates.



Chez un Peintre de Mode,
Oil on Canvas, 59" x 59"



Reposo Sobre Mantel Mexicano, Oil on Board with Drawing, 18" x 28"

ALVAR SUÑOL 1954 - 2014

Retrospective at the Casa de Cultura, Girona, Spain

In 2014, the Casa de Cultura (The Cultural Center) in Girona, Spain held a 50 year retrospective exhibition for Alvar Suñol, showing the development of his works in 44 pieces completed from 1954 through 2014. The exhibition featured works from early in his career, as well as recent works from his *Interiors* series, completed between 2008 and 2013. In the exhibition catalog *Alvar Suñol: Una Antològica des del 1954-2014 (Alvar Suñol: An Anthology from 1954-2014)*, several admirers – including art critics, art historians, and curators – of Alvar’s works explore the historical impact of his art in terms of skill, style, and thematic content, and how these affect the art community within a Catalanian, Spanish, and contemporary art context. This retrospective traced the themes that Alvar would hone and evolve in his career as an artist working in various mediums.

Spanish art historian Montserrat Puertas, whose essay “Approaching the Interiors of Alvar Suñol,” says of Alvar’s works,

[Alvar’s] themes are a series of images, both lived and remembered, visually expressed with a narrative framed in architecture and interior spaces, in real or imagined places, where the painter and his exterior world exist... [he] converts the need to paint into an existential journey.

Puertas explains the inherent imaginative quality that comes through in Alvar’s works as being one of his signature traits worthy of recognition. His skill as an artist comes from his inventiveness and his incessant urge to create – neither of which has waned in his 50 year artistic career.

The retrospective celebrates the success Alvar has garnered on an international platform over the past half century, but it also anticipates what creations Alvar will develop next.



Casa de Cultura, Girona, Spain



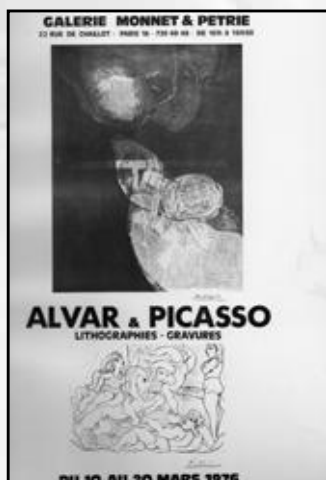
TV Interview with Alvar



Audience at the Retrospective Opening



Alvar and painting *Escala sobre un camp de blat sembrat a Montgat l'any 1958*, Oil on Canvas, 77" x 135"



Alvar and Picasso
Exhibition Poster, 1976,
Paris, France



L'Entrada (The Entrance), Oil on
Canvas, 59" x 59", 2013

ALVAR & TIME



Fig. 3. *Entorns II*, Oil on Canvas, 59" x 59"



Fig. 4. *Temps Era Temps*, Oil on Canvas, 28" x 36"



Fig. 1. *A Picasso*, Oil on Board with Drawing, 20" x 23"

Time is a prominent and recurring theme in Alvar's work. Via the multifaceted ways that "time" can be interpreted, Alvar is able to explore a number of important questions that shape his approach to painting, and often, the context of his art itself. The clock, as viewers may notice, is an integral component to Alvar's imagery.

In *A Picasso* (Fig. 1), 2013, Alvar uses the idea of "breaking hours" to explore one facet of interpreting time and tradition. The numbers on the clock are scattered throughout the painting in order to reference Picasso's total break in traditional thought, given his consideration of both two-dimensional and three-dimensional space, among a number of other new ideas. Picasso's development of cubist aesthetics broke tradition as well as the metaphoric "clock" as depicted by Alvar.

The same concept can be applied to Alvar's work *Girasoles (Sunflowers)* (Fig. 2), 2012, where the clock is featured with no hours so as to recognize the timelessness of Van Gogh's work and his impact on art history. This work features Van Gogh's self portrait from 1886 as well as the renowned work *A Pair of Shoes* from the same year. These simple peasant shoes have been the subject of a number of philosophical inquiries including Martin Heidegger's essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 1950. The paintings in combination with the clock allow Alvar to pay homage to an artist that has redefined time and the spectrum of contemporary art.

In distinction, *Entorns (Environments) II* (Fig. 3), 2014, is a very reflexive painting by Alvar, with a focus on the present. An introspective figure leans on a console. The books above the figure's head refer to the great painters that have influenced Alvar's work, including Leonardo da Vinci, whose book cover has an index finger pointing upwards. Next to the book case is a painting by Alvar.

One could interpret the composition as a form of homage, but also as a self-directed reminder of Alvar's own consideration of his impact on contemporary art and the broader context of his role in art history.



Fig. 2. *Girasoles*, Oil on Board with Drawing, 20" x 24"

For Alvar, time is always slipping away as displayed in *Temps Era Temps (Long Time Ago)* (Fig. 4), 2009. Time is ephemeral as demonstrated by the hours falling away. It is only by remembering the past and thinking of the future that time is preserved.

Overall, Alvar's reference to time is an integral component to understanding his art.

WHO'S TALKING ABOUT ALVAR

The first oil canvas I ever purchased was the painting *Personaje Sur Table* (1971) by Alvar in 1982. Soon I met Alvar and we became fast friends. My wife and my children have literally grown up with Alvar in their lives with viewing his works in our home and interacting with him personally. Alvar is an incomparable blessing in our lives. Alvar paintings dominate my medical office to inspire me and my staff to do the best for our patients. There is an intellectuality and a solemnity in his works that is arresting. Conversing with him philosophically regarding his unique oeuvre has led to the many biblical-themed paintings that grace the walls of the Dallas Museum of Biblical Art. I cannot exist without Alvar!

-Prof. Wayne F. Yakes, MD, FSIR, FCIRSE and Alvar Collector

As an art dealer with over 40 years experience, when choosing to represent an artist, we look at the same criteria as when choosing a racehorse: pedigree and background. These two factors - education and technique - are important in defining an artist. They must have skills... Alvar fits that criteria. He is recognized all over the world and will go down in history as one of the greatest artists that has come from Spain.

-Paul Zueger, Gallery Owner

Majestic works of great size are realized by an artist with an expansive trajectory that has evolved as a result of changes made to his interior life by his vivid life experiences. In his works are links to the past, works that come from his own past that hang on the walls of each space. Ancient objects coexist with the modern, establishing an interconnection between past and present, carrying with it technological advances such as the computer or microwave.

-Gemma Casanovas, "El Interior de Alvar Suñol," June 2012

Traditional biblical artists typically focus on the fine details of figures or the correct proportions of man -- think of the famous *Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo -- but Alvar, who cites a background in primarily secular art, has taken famous biblical themes and given them a surrealist, ethereal look."

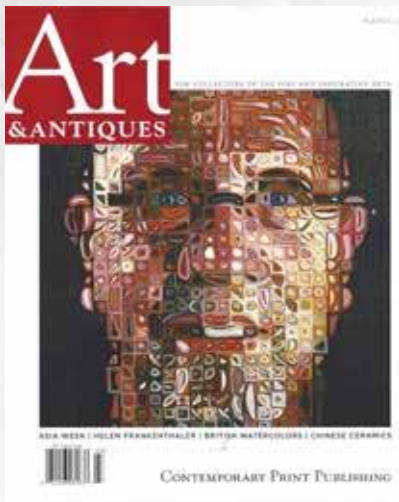
-Florian Overfelt, "Spanish Artist Alvar Suñol Munoz-Ramos Brings Biblical Artwork to LU," *News and Advance*, August 2014

Over the past [decades], Alvar has constructed in his art a fantasy world in which people commune with one another in intimate spaces... in the peace that comes from re-enacting the simple, basic, millenia-old rituals of human life... It is the world whose center is an ancient Catalan village of the nostalgic imagination untouched by globalization. It is a world that is not described but rather evoked by the rearrangements of the same icons, the same embossed patterns, the same figures with the same Romanesque faces.

-Betty Jean Craige, Retired Director of the Willson Center for the Humanities and Arts at the University of Georgia



Diari de Girona, January 2014

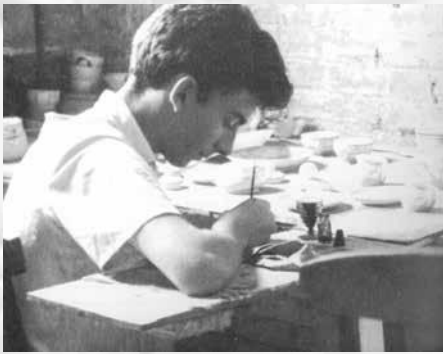


Art & Antiques, March 2013



The Liberty Champion, August 2014

ABOUT ALVAR



Alvar Suñol Muñoz-Ramos, commonly known as Alvar, was born in 1935 in Montgat, a Catalan fishing village on the Mediterranean coast near Barcelona. By the age of 17, he was accepted into the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de San Jorge in Barcelona. In 1960, he moved to Paris and exhibited with other major Catalan artists including Picasso, Miró, and Dalí. Today, Alvar is recognized on an international platform for his ability to convey the complex nature of human existence and the psychological complexities of art-making and creation. His works can be found in the permanent collection of over fourteen museums worldwide and has also several public commissions throughout, including his most recent bronze sculpture created in honor of cellist Pablo Casals that can be found in Paris, France. In 2014, La Casa de Cultura (The Cultural Center) of Girona, Catalonia, Spain hosted a retrospective celebrating 50 years of artistic production by Alvar. Alvar strengthens his artistic vision through the use of various mediums, including oil painting, lithographs, watercolors, drawings, bronze, and ceramic bas relief sculptures. Alvar's influence, and the innovation of his artistic presence in the Catalanian and contemporary context, is undeniable.

