

## Ramón Acín's *Las Pajaritas* (The Origami Little Birds)

Antonio Saura (Huesca, 1930 - Cuenca, 1998)

Painter and intellectual of international projection, creator with Millares, Canogar, Feito, Juana Francés and others from the “El Paso Group” that marked a break in plastic concepts in Spain at the end of the 50s of the last century, opening the doors to the artistic avant-garde. of the second half of the 20th century.



*Las Pajaritas Fountain* created by Acín and installed in Huesca Park in 1929

The bluish shadow of a white monument featuring striking, pronounced edges, of a naive and perfect monument, located in a paradisiacal garden, forever blurs our vision of a generous and tragic figure. In spite of my parents' fond memories of him, in spite of the friendship with his daughter Katia, in spite of a splendid thesis by Miguel Bandrés summarized in a small and beautiful book, Ramón Acín *the man*, obscured by an amalgam of utopia, experimentation, satire, nationalism, intellectual openness and internationalism, all from his provincial watchtower, never ceases to surprise and arouse curiosity.

Reviewing his life, we find an essentially libertarian Ramón Acín, a burlesque and popular humorist in his beginnings, but also a biting satirical cartoonist, chronicler, poet and pamphleteer. *That peculiar Ramón Acín*, in the words of his friend and namesake Ramón Gómez de la Serna, multifaceted and multifocal, reappears today, after archaeological work, offering us, through tragedy, the remnants of his moving figure. Here are just a few fragments of broken coherence:

Ramón Acín the revolutionary, the founder and contributor to anarchist publications given dra-



matic names: *La Ira (Rage)*, from 1913, created in Barcelona and banned after the release of its second issue, an *instrument for the expression of the people's disgust and anger*; *Talión (Retaliation)*, from 1917, of which no copy remains; *Floreal*, produced between 1919 and 1920, also in Huesca, a *magazine against everything and everyone*, as Felipe Alaiz says, and of which, apparently, only a fragment of an article by Acín has survived.

Ramón Acín the writer was the author of acerbic and on-the-mark *Floreccicas*, like this one from 1923: "*Shots here, shots there; all the newspapers are going to have to open a section entitled: Bang! Bang! Bang!*"

Ramón Acín the author of manifestos, such as the one devoted to the foundation of the New Bohemian Society, at the end of which he says: "*We have as our banner a love of culture, a cult of fraternity and freedom; thus failure will never be with us; we may be few, but then we would just have more love.*"

Ramón Acín the defender of just causes: the irrigation of the Upper Aragón, for example; the reforestation of the sierras, the promotion of tourism, connecting Aragón with France via the Canfranc railroad, Ramón Acín the defender of cherished traditions (see his defense of Huesca's Gigantes y Cabezudos festival figures, temporarily slated for the trash heap), and of the charming Teatro Principal theater, now, sadly, having disappeared; or his criticism of the bad work of the restorers of monuments that would begin to adulterate the physiognomy of an ancient and beautiful city that should have been easy to preserve.

Ramón Acín, who helped to produce Luis Buñuel's *Tierra sin pan (Land Without Bread)* with money from a lottery prize; Ramón Acín the social chronicler and polemicist, a defender of sports but an enemy of soccer, a supporter of horses rather than bullfights, a proponent for the decent treatment of animals: "*It is true that in order to respect the agony of animals, we should first begin to respect the agony of men, and not add bitterness to bitterness*"; Ramón Acín the pedagogue, an advocate for the *Escuela de Libre Enseñanza* and for Freinet's school printing press: "*the works by children produced by these little toy-like machines have the charm of those old incunabula.*"

Ramón Acín the enemy of the clergy: "*Trappists, Dominicans, Carmelites, Jesuits, the smoke that wafts through your embrasures, under your armored doors, through the vents of your underground sanctuaries, that smoke will not always be incense.*" Ramón Acín the antimilitarist: "*I remembered an instant, nothing more, like a ghostly vision, of those expansive cemeteries of European battlefields, and, in the absence of friends and pious hands to caress the crosses, I saw Mother Nature consoling them, piously, offering not to forget them, and sending them in the spring the sparkle of her butterflies.*"

Ramón Acín the art critic, writing heartfelt words about the two most beautiful nudes in the art of a country so wanting in female nudes: "My God, my God, this is not just canvas and colors, this is flesh, flesh, like the flesh of our lovers!" he exclaimed beholding Goya's *Naked Maja*; and, before Velázquez's *Venus*: "*It remained for him to paint that flesh covered with carnations, and lilies, and honey, and milk, and rays of sun, and Divine breaths, and bumblebees, and long bites, and one day our Don Diego painted his Venus and Cupid, and he painted no more, and died soon thereafter.*"



Ramón Acín, the author and sole signer of the manifesto *Fuendetodos, March 1746 Bordeaux, April 1828*, in which he lashes out against the academic, party-line, pompous and conventional tone of the commemorative acts for Goya's centennial in 1928. Asking only for a few minutes of silence, in an article published on this occasion, he states categorically and accurately: "*They do not present him as he is, but as they want him to be.*"

Ramón Acín was a draftsman, but also an excellent typographic designer; see his poster for Ramón Gómez de la Serna's conference and its impeccable spatial resolution; and another announcing an exhibition at the Círculo Oscense in 1932, with its striking typography, worthy of being included in the most select anthology of design. See also his composition for the *Manifiesto del Centenario de Goya*, conceived in a turn-of-the century style; and his postcard in the form of a bank bill, praising in tandem the talent of Beethoven and Goya, on which one can read, at the bottom of the effigy of the former: "*He immortalized the Aragonese jota in the third movement of the seventh symphony*", and under that of the latter: "*He strove to promote universal brotherhood in his Disasters of War.*"

Ramón Acín the sculptor, the creator of a project dedicated to Luis López Allué, conceived to feature pairs of giraffes or elephants facing each other. Never realized, the monument morphed into a statue portraying little birds, as of folded paper, rendered in metal. Ramón Acín the commentator on his own work in the catalogue of the exhibition held in 1931 at the Ateneo de Madrid cultural center, where, with brevity, he defined an aesthetic of the ephemeral, whose principles still remain relevant: "*I exhibited some cheap metal sheets enhanced by simple folds, and some lightly colored packing cartons framed with trunk rods.*"

*Las Pajaritas (The Little Birds)*, the monument located in Huesca's park, actually reflects this humble concept of sculpture, it being precisely the freshness of its approach, its conceptual simplicity, as well as the successful plastic vision entailed by the project's change of scale, that give this monument not only its immediate and resounding presence, but also an aura of modernity that is somewhat premonitory. Today we can see *Las Pajaritas* not as an object destined exclusively for children's enjoyment, but as a playful work whose specular play and minimalist effectiveness associate it with certain aspects of more recent art.

In fact, I came to be aware of Ramón Acín due to a love of a sculpture; it became a childhood fetish, a symbol of the lost garden of delights, an icon fixed forever in fervent nostalgia, even summarizing the sensual overturning of the gaze. Since my childhood, this monument has remained in my memory as a symbol of my hometown; as a central, happy space the memory of which was later infused, by history, with tragic content.

Recently, I have been able to confirm the persistence of this image irrevocably anchored in my senses. Among the different possible titles for the painting I did for the regional government of Huesca, I chose *Elegia (Elegy)*, alluding to the term's pleasant, less standard meaning. The name is supposed to reflect what this painting seeks to be; that is, a compelling reference to both origins and to modernity. The conceptual ambiguity that could arise from such a denomination when interpreted as a painful or melancholic lament would only make sense when referring metaphorically to a children's paradise, the garden of delights, which has disappeared, an awakening of the senses, presided over ineluctably by Ramón Acín's luminous castle.



I would have liked to know him through more than the fervent shadow of a fetish. Had it been possible, I do not know if I would have agreed with the opinion he expressed of himself in a short text from 1928 dedicated to Goya's centennial: "*there was in Aragon a poor devil, poorer and more devilish than the others, but who knew how to be silent and knew how to raise his voice.*" What is certain is that this lucid devil, *this peculiar Acín*, who knew how to raise his voice so well, left us, together with his ramified libertarian generosity and the polyfocal effervescence of his talent, one of the most beautiful sculptures ever created for a garden, and that this sculpture, as stark as it is pleasant, summarizes, better than other grandiloquent and fatuous monuments, plastic lucidity and experimentation, timeless play and primitive freshness.□

