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When Jacint SaIvadó celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday in the mid 70s, Gérard Xuriguera said that he was still the picture of unchangeable youth. The same applies to his work, full of such vigorous energy and bright colours that it gives us a glimpse of his fresh, exuberant adolescent's soul.

With resolute unfairness, history has ignored the work of this curious, passionate being who, as Maria Luisa Borrás very accurately pointed out, committed an unforgivable sin for slaves of the whims of fashion: that of always being true to himself and art. José Maria Moreno Galván agreed with this precise observation, but all those of us who have been lucky enough to approach his work, albeit on tiptoe, could also endorse it.

The fact that Salvadó has been forgotten is not merely unfair. It is more than that: it is inexplicable. A friend of Picasso and Derain, considered by Uhde and Charensol one of the most important painters of his generation, he passed away practically unknown to anybody. Fifteen years ago – is it so long? – Jacint Salvadó died far away from his home town Montroig, near Marseille. With his death, art lost one of its foremost figures. Neither then nor ten years later, nor even today, has culture been aware that it has lost a genius, one of the great artists not only of his generation but of all the history of Spanish art.

Humble and kind-hearted by nature, according to those who knew him, the only glory SaIvadó knew in his lifetime was painting, colour, form, rhythm. Beauty, which is to be found in each and every one of his works. He was not afraid to evolve, and that strength which no doubt stems from that thing we call the spirit allowed him to search for his essence until he found himself, navigating in the troubled waters of figurative expressionism and later in those of cubism until he cast anchor in a pure and shaded constructivist and abstract universe.

'We have both found our way into the Louvre museum, you as a painter and I as a model. But the museum where I like to see you best is M. Grevin's wax museum.' This anecdote, told by Gonzalo Fortea, gives us an approximate idea of Salvadó's simple character: on Picasso's ninetieth birthday, the French government, as a tribute to the Málaga painter, temporarily placed the most famous of the three harlequins painted by Picasso in the place of the Gioconda. From the canvas of the painting, a thirty-two-year-old Jacint Salvadó looked and will forever look defiantly on the world. A model for Picasso and before that for Derain, Salvadó, a friend and collaborator of them both, was admired by great masters like Juan Gris, Braque, Arp or Bill.

Thinking of Salvadó in a fast exercise of the memory, the first thing that springs to my mind is a photograph of him when he was quite old, or at least as old as his youthful spirit would allow him to become. The snap, in black and white, suggests to me all the strong and endearing part of his nature. There is something childlike in his eyes that can be found in the eyes of many geniuses. The freshness of a child, the insatiable curiosity of a wise spirit, life in its pure state, passing like a long film on the retina of his ever open eyes. In spite of the injustice suffered in his lifetime, I do not think I am wrong to say that Jacint Salvadó, that 'very young old man' as Miguel Fernández Braso called him in the newspaper ABC, was a grateful man, who lived and died reconciled to the circumstances of his life, always glad to be able to participate in each small drama or each small joy of existence and filter them through to others in the form of art, with an overflowing colourist lyricism, full of energy until the end.

He, who did not hold more than ten exhibitions in Spain in his lifetime (let us recall briefly that he exhibited at the Galerías Dalmau in 1921; at Juana Mordó in Madrid in 1973; at the

Galeria Italia in Alicante in 1975; at Juana Mordo again in 1976; at Valle Ortí in Valencia and again at the Galeria Italia in Alicante in 1978. The last ones took place in 1981 at Juana Mordo and in 1982 at the Galeria Goya in Zaragoza, and the rest were all after his death), was said to become emotional whenever, after a lifetime spent in France, where he was luckier with his exhibitions, as he was in Germany, he was mentioned in his own country. Reviews full of praise are still conserved of the first showing at the Galerias Dalmau in Barcelona, which kept Salvadó three months in Spain. Gaudi himself is said to have been so taken with Salvadó's work that he went to see the exhibition several times. The tribute organized so many years afterwards, in 1994, at this same gallery, served not only to acknowledge and pay homage to Salvadó but to show a selection of the most important works of all the artist's different periods; to pay a posthumous tribute to the talent and the memory of a great man.

But the recovery of Salvadó is a challenge we must all keep on fighting for. All of us. In order to deliver a deadly blow to the monster of unfair oblivion. How long can a person of such great artistic and human dimensions be ignored? I want to be optimistic and believe that the effort of those who admire him and time, history, or whatever we should call that unstoppable, inscrutable force that moves everything, will put things in their place. That is as it should be. I can only wish it will be soon.