



ALBERT BINIMELIS-MULET
ARTIST WITHOUT A HEAD



Detail of *Bixtos I (Bugs I)*, 61 x 50cm, Mix Media on Canvas

Albert came into my life almost accidentally. It began with a passing remark by my friend Matias about his nephew, a talented young artist living a hermit-like existence in rural Mallorca. Yet while my friendship with Matias' family deepened, Albert remained on the periphery — an intriguing but unknown quantity.

The turning point was a family gathering at Albert's home to mark the first anniversary of his grandmother's death, where I finally met this near-mythical figure. The examples of his work I saw that day astounded me, and I convinced him to let me see his studio.

It was impossible to absorb everything I saw: astonishing mixed media experiments with texture and volume; a mastery of colour that revealed strength, brightness and a precocious yet sophisticated variety of subject matter.

My subsequent professional journey with Albert has been revelatory. Initially, it was the audience response that intrigued and amazed: a pregnant woman's emotional reaction to *Vase with Blue Flowers*, and a man so unsettled by the unflinching gaze of Albert's portraits, he found it hard to reconcile that the same mind created the delicate and intricate world of *Bixtos*.

The first group of Albert's paintings I brought back still adorn my most personal spaces, and they speak to me in different voices every day. Yet perhaps it is the joy of watching Albert's creative process that has given me the greatest pleasure. I have witnessed the intense outbursts of creative energy; how music and dance help dispel the stress, and how he caresses the shapes and figures that emerge from, or disappear back, into the canvas.

Five years on, and I am proud to show Albert's work to the world, knowing that there are few painters like him — artists who live to paint whatever flows from their minds, without inhibition or explanation. It was this intellectual and emotional honesty that has been pivotal in moulding the sensibility of GV Art, and in creating the exciting community of artists we work with today.

But Albert has taught me a still more valuable lesson: that any pursuit of greater self-awareness or self-expression leads to a deeper understanding of, and compassion for, our fellow man. For this alone, I am in his debt.

Robert Devčić

Founder and Director

GV Art, London



Beard, 61 x 50cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Dancing Lesson, 50 x 61 cm, Acrylic on Canvas



You Are My Mirror, 120 x 240cm, Mix Media on Board

HEADSPACE

The Art of Albert Binimelis-Mulet

To observe an audience engage with the art of Albert Binimelis-Mulet is always a rewarding experience.

A young child appears mesmerized by butterflies that seemingly hover above the canvas — their animated expression illustrating their delight in the mysteries of their environment, their joy of discovery and the need for tactile engagement with the work itself. The canvas invites them closer; the child pauses and approaches slowly as if attempting to capture this delicate creature.

Nearby, an adult is transfixed by the eyes of a *pagesa*, a typical Mallorcan woman who stares at them from across the room. Drawing near, the viewer realises she appears set to emerge from the collage of latex, acrylics, fabrics and French chalk where she rests momentarily. You are witness to the beginnings of an unheard conversation.

Like Rosarch tests, Albert's work elicits a variety of responses which, in turn, tell us a great deal about the viewer: not only how they perceive the world around them and their place in it, but also their attitude to life itself. That each and every "reading" differs also tells us something of the richness of Albert's emotional vocabulary — a complex assemblage of dissonant narratives and scrambled voices. Yet any attempt to 'capture' the instincts that fuel Albert's creative imagination remains futile for, like the butterflies themselves, they are sensitive to our approach and, without warning, take flight.



Napoleon, 61x 50cm, Mix Media on Canvas

sensations that hint at some more epic narrative which, for whatever reason, remains unfinished and therefore unread.

“I believe that feeling is the ultimate goal of every work of art”, he explains. “In my work, feeling is pursued through abstraction, and abstraction is expressed through the concrete form.” Albert’s complex strategy is best illustrated in his many portraits; *Frieda Kahlo*, *Tattoo Woman*, *Junkie*, *Sa Dona des Port*, *Beard* are all works that feature Albert’s trademark — a hypnotic gaze that looks directly at and through the viewer. We are invited to

Within the confines of a gallery, Albert’s work creates a self-contained universe. It instantly transforms its setting with the colours and sounds of an alien landscape and populates it with an extraordinary cast of characters that speak of the artist’s Mallorcan origins. Yet, to consider Albert simply a naturalist who seeks to convey the beauty of rural Manacor is erroneous. Examine these works more closely and one discovers something other than a bucolic idyll: from the Orwellian pig *Napoleon*, whose powerful presence is barely contained by the canvas, to the erotically-charged butterflies and the abstracted interpersonal dynamics of *Chattering IV* (a depiction of birds at rest in a sun-bleached landscape, yet also suggestive of a brutal courtroom drama, complete with judge, jury and the executed). Nature is not simply anthropomorphized, it is shown as a collection of individual identities that interact in ways that are puzzling to the viewer and, perhaps, to the artist himself. In each of these series, Albert has created a range of



Detail of **Chattering IV**, 50 x 61cm, Mix Media on Canvas

observe the world as if through a kaleidoscope, via the lenses of our own consciousness and that of Albert and his creations. These abstracted emotions find expression not only in the figures themselves but also their setting. Influenced by the celebrated Mallorcan artist, Joan Riera Ferrari, and resident American expat Ellis Jacobson, Albert initially used the technique of collage (employing everything from recycled fabric to soft-drink bottles) to create a synaesthetic world of audible colours, tactile sounds and saporific sensation. This intuitive ability has found a more mature expression in his pioneering use of volume. Utilising a variety of different materials from French chalk to Dolomite dust, Albert's works have taken on a three-dimensional, sculptural quality, one clearly visible in his most recent work, *You Are My Mirror*. Yet, in looking at such paintings, it is necessary to remind ourselves that what we see is only a final layer. Below the surface are a whole cast of characters and objects that have simply disappeared in Albert's restless and ever-evolving vision. Yet have they truly disappeared for, as he carves into this growing mass, all these emotional and intellectual elements are brought to the surface once more.

For this reason alone, it is more fitting to consider such works not portraits but rather dioramas. Visible through the pin-hole of the canvas are broad psychological landscapes that are both tumultuous and yet strangely at peace with themselves. This yin/yang-like duality is clearly an important aspect of the artist's own psyche and a key to understanding the complex dynamics of works such as *Priest, Child and Woman*. At first glance, we are unsettled by the intentions of the central figure, disturbed by the indifference of the Church elders, the passivity of the child and the complicity of his mother. Yet are these dynamics not also suggestive of other relationships also based upon collusion, corruption and/or mutual deceit? Are we mere observers in this "psychodrama" or are we both active participants in, and architects of, our own tragedy? Once again, our reactions to Albert's work are telling.



Opera, 73 x 92cm, Latex, Pigments and Oils on Canvas

Given his upbringing and his environment, it is hardly surprising that religious motifs appear repeatedly in his work. Still, the influence of “faith” is not thematic but aesthetic. The grid-like structure of the Spanish tomb or altar in *Saint Anthony* reappears in many guises: in the architecture of *New Year’s Eve*, the catacomb-like *Painting Will Eventually Burn You Out and Still and Moving Life*, and the saintly figures of *Opera*. However, these compartmentalized compositions also speak of a more personal and deeply urgent need. Albert’s works are an outpouring of intense energy. Seemingly unable to commit to a single painting, he moves rapidly between multiple canvases, engaging with, yet maintaining, a critical distance from the deluge of ideas and emotions that inform his work. The box-like compartments or the caged structures seen in *Ocells I and II* are the artist’s endeavour to capture and contain the enormity and universality of such imaginings and create a semblance of order from the chaos of the creative process. He himself is surely aware that all such efforts are futile. As the ideas and emotions escape these man-made boundaries and cross-fertilize, these barriers disappear into the canvas, reappear elsewhere and once again dissolve. Just like his fixation with volume, his need to give glossy acrylics a matte finish and the constant reconfigurations of the canvas, these lines and cages speak of a quest to understand a universe that defies logical definition and geometrical order.

Nevertheless, “The Artist Without a Head” is ever conscious of the limitations of the human mind. Instead, the worlds he creates are a reflection of his own, both rational and intuitive. *With You Are My Mirror*, Albert is asking us to engage with the complex personal and emotional history of those he depicts. Whether we are capable of absorbing their lives into our own is irrelevant, for he has pointed us in the direction of something far more important. It is a sense of empathy that is critical to our own humanity. In short, our common headspace.

Jonathan Hutt PhD | Shanghai-London | February 2009



Detail of **You Are My Mirror**, 120 x 240cm, Mix Media on Board



New Years Eve, 92 x 73cm, Mix Media on Canvas

"I paint from my head, finding forms and shapes from the materials employed. To work from sketches can be too deterministic. I prefer not to know how the painting will end."

Albert Binimelis-Mulet



Tattoo Woman, 74 x 61cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Peasant Woman, 610 x 50 cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Chattering X, 65 x 81 cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Banyares, 46 x 55cm, Fabric, Acrylic, Pencil and Latex



Flutter I, 130 x 97cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Flutter II, 130 x 97cm, Mix Media on Canvas



Bird Series XXV, 46 x 33cm, Mix Media on Canvas



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