

Nuno Barreto

Thursday, 25 June 2009

The name sounds familiar to those who have been following Macau's cultural life over the past twenty years.

Having arrived here in 1988, the Professor and painter from the prestigious Escola Superior das Belas Artes do Porto (ESBAP) was behind the creation of Macau's Visual Arts School (EAV) the following year.

He presided over the school until 1993, having educated during that period numerous local young artists and instilled in them the taste for plastic arts.

Later on Nuno Barreto dedicated exclusively to painting, and a great deal of his works were widely admired in exhibitions both locally and overseas. Many are still exhibited in public places linked to culture and social gatherings. The Clube Militar is an example.

Barreto divided his life between Macau and Porto, the city where he was born in 1941 and where he graduated from ESBAP with the highest marks in 1967. His 'Alma Mater' would also be the place where he would be teaching for over 15 years.

Barreto's work reflects – as Prof. Baptista Pereira points out “ a very special talent to capture the 'spirit of the place', along with the feeling of the people that inhabit it”.

Yet, curiously, one might say that Nuno managed to stay in Macau and at the same time refusing to let himself into complete integration here. He would capture its spirit but not absorb it. He conveyed feelings and yet not always participated in them.

While his canvases registered widespread and diverse cultural manifestations, the artist's cultural roots would remain untouched and unabated, even though he had let himself into a different community by way of marriage.

Through his painting, the artist surrounded himself with his own special world. He organised his own self “hidden order” as he once told a common friend. A world where there would be a fixed time schedule for everything: a time to share with friends, a time to paint, a time for leisure.

“And evening is always the time to stay home,” he stated philosophically.

A man of outstanding culture, deep learning and solid knowledge of life, Barreto had a way with words. In every cultural gathering and friends' rendez-vous he would impose on others his excellent gifts of a communicator. Reserved to someone who lived his life to teach.

Barreto would be utterly mad whenever someone said of having seen his works copied in Zhuhai... But then he would return to his pencils and canvases, reestablish links and exchange ideas in the blogue he set up. The latest discovery that filled him with enthusiasm as a child.

As the early minutes signalled a new day, yesterday, in Oporto, Nuno Barreto was finally defeated by cancer, after a long battle.

Thus he left again, and this once towards a dimension of chromatic contours yet to be defined by any living soul.

Maybe Nuno would …

RBC