

Biography Summary

José de Guimarães was born on 25 November 1939 in Guimaraes, Portugal. He studied in Portugal and in various European countries.

From 1967 to 1974, the artist resided in Angola, immersed in the culture and studying African ethnography and native art. This is when Guimarães began his fascinating project of synthesis: creating osmosis between the African and European cultures.

Guimarães' fascination with other cultures continued to grow. In 1989, the artist worked closely with the Japanese culture creating various sculptures and public art pieces for the country. Numerous public works by Guimarães can be found in Tokyo, Kobe, Akita, Kyoto, Tsunami and Kushiro to name but a few cities. And other works are also on display in Japanese galleries and museums, including Fuji Television Gallery, Akemi Foundation, and many others.

Around 1993, the artist travelled extensively to Mexico to explore the archaeology and the richness of the culture. In 1996, Guimarães completed two *azulejos* murals for a metro station in Mexico. His "Mexico" series was exhibited in different European countries as well as in the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico (1997). The Mexican National Museum of Grabado organised a retrospective of Guimarães' drawings.

In 1999, Guimarães inaugurated eight life-size, monumental sculptures – steel trees with neon lighting for a new "Art Garden" in Macao.

Back in his homeland, "Lisbonne", a sculpture 26 meters high, was installed in la Praça on 25 of April 2001 in the capital. The city's mayor also organised a retrospective exhibition, "Cordoaria Nacional".

In the same year, 2001, another retrospective exhibition was held in the Museum of Würth, Germany. 2002 saw a selection of the artist's pieces exhibited at Hillside Forum of Daikanyama in Tokyo and his contemporary works displayed at the Fuji Television Gallery. The artist also participated in the international exhibition "Haag Sculpture 2002" in the Netherlands. The public art piece, Deutsche Oper, was also created for a metro station in Berlin. In 2003, two retrospective exhibits were organized: one for the Caixanova cultural centre in Vigo, Ourense and Pontevedra, Spain and the second for the inauguration of the Forum Würth in Arlesheim, Switzerland and in 2005 an anthological exhibition was organized in São Paulo, Brazil.

The international experience continues to add to the richness of the art, and deepened Guimarães' creative purpose, to connect different cultures.

His upcoming exhibits include a solo show at the London Art Fair in January 2006 as well an exhibition of the artist's works in Beijing during the Spring.

The Gallery Neupergama in Portugal exhibits the series, "The Battle of Carthage".

His most recent pieces with neon lighting are permanently on display in Paris at Gallery Hélène Lamarque.

Art Commentary

José de Guimarães was born in Portugal and educated throughout Europe. In the seventies, he spent seven years in Angola immersed in the study of African ethnography and art. It is at this point that Guimarães' fascination with the synthesis, the osmosis, of different cultures began. And it is at this point he says he became an artist.

He developed an "alphabet" of symbols. It started in Angola, inspired by the inscriptions of the "Ngoygos", the Cabinda tribe, but soon the alphabet became less ideographical, less tied to a place, and more universal, more automated. The aim was not to capture a singular idea/object unique to a place, but one that was trans-cultural yet personal, a metamorphosis of European and African archetypes and ideas. He has since journeyed to Asia and Mexico, and his alphabet has evolved to incorporate his experiences and observations from these other places.

The works are thus a combining and a superimposing of symbols, prototypes and myths. But they are not just anthropological: in their formal and ideological automatism, they also have philosophical implications. In assimilating, metamorphosing, Guimarães is interested in the expansion of the Being. As the artist states, "my creative purpose has a true sense of interconnection among the different cultures I have deeply observed in order to produce a peaceful and a utopian melting pot of cultures." For forty years the artist has created baroque work, exuberant with complete freedom and spontaneity, trying to capture the range of universal human joy and tragedy.

In the exhibition at the London Art Fair – Art Space, he presents his most recent works which use neon lights, in addition to his characteristic combination of paintings, sculptures, cut objects, boxes and relics. In fact, the use of neon marks a change in the design and representation of the alphabet. If, during the second half of the 20th century, the incorporation of the "Fee Electricite" (as in the eponymous painting by Dufy) appears in plastic art to renovate the work on shade and darkness, then Guimarães' ideal is quite different. He chooses neon as a symbol of today's urban environment.

He first used neon in a public artwork at the Carnide metro station in Lisbon in 1998, as a source of light both tangible and malleable. The light creates a new power in the colour, which emerges like an aura. The light conveys an allegorical meaning: the medium is spiritual, providing energy to his symbols. At the same time, it also creates intervals between his recurrent forms. In this way, a new syntax is created to connect his alphabets.

"Religare" (to connect in Latin) could be the leitmotiv for his works: not only to connect cultures, but also to connect the archetypes of traditional and modern life.

Public Collections

Angola

Museu de Angola, Luanda

Belgium

Musée Royal d'art moderne, Bruxelles.

Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst, Anvers.

Middelheim Museum, Anvers.

Fondation Veranneman, Kruishoutem.

Université Catholique, Louvain.

Collection de l'Etat belge, Bruxelles.

Brazil

Museu de Arte Moderna (MASP), São Paulo.

Museu de Arte Contemporânea (MAC), Universidade de São Paulo.

Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.

Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM), Rio de Janeiro.

Canada

Carlton University, Ottawa (Ontario)

China (Macau)

Museu Luís de Camões.

Banco do Oriente.

Jardim das Artes.

France

Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris.

Parlement européen, Strasbourg.

Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

Collection Cérés Franco, Lagrasse.

Germany

Würth Museum, Kunzelsau.

Art Kite Museum, Detmold.

Metro Station "Deutsche Oper", Berlin.

Korea

Olympic Park, Seoul.

Israel

Musée de Dimona, Neguev.

Japan

Akemi Foundation, Osaka.

Fuji Television Gallery, Tokyo.

Tachikawa City, Tokyo.

Kyoto Station, Kyoto.

Miyagi Prefectural Library, Miyagi.

Akita Prefectural Building, Akita.

Kushiro City, Kushiro.

Echigo-Tsumari, Niigata.

Mexico

“Chabacano” Metro Station.
Museo de Arte Moderno.
Museo Nacional de la Estampa.

Netherlands

Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, Amsterdam.

Portugal

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon.
Museu Nacional de Arte Moderna, Fundação de Serralves, Porto.
Colecção do Estado Português, Lisbon.
Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.
Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon.
Museu das Cruses, Funchal (Madeira)
Colecção do Governo Regional de Madeira, Madère.
Museu do Alberto Sampaio, Guimarães.
Museu do Caramulo, Caramulo.
Museu de Angra do Heroísmo, Angra do Heroísmo (Açores).
Museu Martins Sarmento, Guimarães.
Palácio Nacional de Sintra, Sintra.
Museu Amadeu de Sousa Cardoso, Amarante.
“Carnide” Metro Station, Lisbon.
Armazéns do Chiado, Lisbon.
Praça 25 de Abril, Lisbon.
Museu do Teatro, Lisbon.

Spain

Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid.
Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid.
Museo Nacional de Grabado, Madrid.
Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz.
Sculpture d’exterieur, Tenerife (Canaries)

Switzerland

Musée de l’Horloge, Geneva.
Bibliothèque nationale, Bern.
Musée international d’Horlogerie, La Chaux-de-Fonds.
Forum WÜRTH, Arlesheim.

United States

Frederick Weisseman Foundation, Los Angeles (California)
Rockefeller Art Center (SUNY), Fredonia, New York City (New York)