

La Palma: Teacher, guide and model

La Palma was the teacher, guide and model that directed Francisco Concepción's art. But just as a painter simultaneously is and is not what his instructors taught him at art school, so when Francisco Concepción painted places other than La Palma—the amazing landscapes of Las Cañadas del Teide, all of Tenerife, Lanzarote, old Madrid, Segovia, Zamora, Galicia or the Basque provinces—he painted with the art he had learned from La Palma, but the different skies, lights and waters are the contrast, weight and measure of his skill as a painter.⁴

In several interviews granted over the course of his career, Francisco Concepción acknowledged Antonio González Suárez and Mario Baudet as two of his greatest island teachers. He was introduced to them by his first mentor, Manuel Brito Cabezola, who encouraged him to work for and by painting. Brito was also responsible for starting a regular gathering known as the Sabatina [meaning “something of or related to Saturday”], initially held at his home with González Suárez and Baudet in the 1940s but soon relocated to a room on the rooftop of Teatro Circo de Marte owned by the Baudet Oliver brothers.

They were joined by intellectuals, shopkeepers, teachers, writers and painters and, in general, islanders or outsiders with varied cultural interests and different political convictions at a time when heterodoxy and the peaceful coexistence of divergent ideals were not well tolerated. Sophisticated music (particularly zarzuelas and operas), cinema (with the effective immediacy of the Circo de Marte venue), literature (also varied in genres and periods) and art were the main topics of discussion at these events, where there was never a shortage of good food and drink. In the socio-cultural desert of post-Civil War Spain, the Sabatina emerged, without meaning to or really thinking of themselves as a group, as a welcome oasis. Although most were involved in pictorial creation and naturalism, composers and writers (especially journalists and essayists) enriched the company with their respective works. Collective contributions, written by several hands, with improvisations and plenty of humour and irony, completed a complex and consequently attractive spectrum.

⁴ José DÍAZ DUQUE, “Sin título”, in *Exposición de óleos: Francisco Concepción* [brochure]. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Casino de Tenerife, 1987.