



Javier Albar works and lives in Madrid, Spain. Javier produces abstract pieces with a restrained and subtle palette. Circles, jagged lines and solid masses of black create compelling designs of powerful presence. Javier combines printing (woodcut, xylography, lithography and plastic) and painting.



Munsterland, 2007, woodcut and lithography, 70 x 50 cm.

Brian Sherwin: Javier, can you tell us about your early years? Can you recall any experiences from your youth that impacted your decision to pursue art as an adult?

Javier Albar: I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. I always wanted to work on something creative. I was not very fulfilled during the time that I worked as an interior design architect even though it was somewhat creative work... I always felt a desire to express creativity more freely. I was 28 when I made the big decision to change direction. Since then my life has changed completely.

Brian: Javier, tell us about your academic background. Where did you study? Who were your instructors? How did your work mature during those years under that guidance?

JA: I started studying interior design at age 20. For 8 years I worked as an interior design architect while struggling with the need for more creative freedom. While working on interior design, someone recommended I go to Brita Prinz Gallery & workshop. It was there that I discovered the joy of xylography and met Eloisa Gil Pena... Three years later, I was studying fine art at the University of Aranjuez in Madrid under very influential instructors.

While attending the university, I worked independently, parallel to the school work. I was trying to develop my unique style and to reach artistic maturity. The University of Fine Arts has given me the practical resources and theoretical training I needed, but the real essence of my art is self taught.



Huella Efimera, 2006, lithography and woodcut, 76 x 50 cm.

Brian: You are from Madrid , Spain ... does your cultural background play a part in your work?

JA: My work has more of a universal appeal. I do not particularly identify with what's known as typical Spanish culture. I am inspired by works from other artists, my own life experiences, the cities and countries I've visited and the memories left by the people I've met... life.

Brian: Javier, you are interested in organic and geometric abstraction. In these works you deal with themes of architectural deconstruction and you utilize circular shapes as a form of transition between the organic and the geometric. Can you go into further detail about these these works-- the thoughts behind them?

JA: My abstractions stemmed from a book of drawings of dinosaurs bones. From there I created various compositions with them. I then drew lines on the tracing paper as if they were architectural plans, and transferred them onto a wooden matrix. My work combines the interior architecture and the shapes of vegetation and organic materials.

A professor of art history once said to me that the organic and geometric were not compatible... I thought a lot about this and came up with a solution using circles. That, to me, would be the best connection between the two. I started experimenting by deconstructing forms and creating the poetics forms, very emotional and intuitive.

With this approach I noticed that in my work I saw what seemed to be maps of invented cities...aerial views of cities lit at night, manmade mechanisms...and textures. I call these textures "skins" of memories of thoughts.



Organicirculo del Deseo, 2006, woodcut, 78 x 54 cm.

Brian: In your use of geometry you do not wish to follow a mathematical calculation. Instead, you adhere to an intuitive and emotional use of geometric forms. Can you go into further detail about this? In your opinion, why do these forms 'speak'?

JA: I draw circles intuitively to create compositions. I discovered that the circle I drew intuitively was reappearing. I call this the 'hidden connections'. Then I realized that my art was a reflection of my life. A circle represented me and the other circles represented people in my life I have had interaction with and the way the circles connected was the connection I had with others. It felt like pure magic.

Brian: As you have mentioned, you discovered xylography at the Brita Prinz Gallery... and that the knowledge of this technique influenced you greatly.

JA: Since I discovered xylography while I was working in interior design architecture and I was drawing many architectural plans, my xylography work is heavily influenced by architecture. This makes my work very different... I felt very fortunate being able to incorporate what I was already doing into a new form of art to become more expressive.



Organicirculo Marino, 2006, woodcut, 70 x 70 cm.

Brian: Javier, can you tell us more about the process of xylography-- how you use it?

JA: I've discovered my own method. I first do line drawings on 4mm Okumen wood. I then cut the shapes out with a cutter. This requires experience and precision. Using different pieces, I superimpose them using a traditional printing method. Transparent inks are used to create different tones and sometimes mixed colors.

Brian: Javier, you are open to experimentation in your work. You now incorporate new techniques combined with xylography, such as lithography and more recently using a matrix of a type of plastic called Arraglás...playing with new resources such as sanded circles and the

atmospheric scratched backgrounds. Why is experimentation important to you as an artist?

JA: For a while now, I have been experimenting with a less perfect and less controlled style. I am attempting to link it to the understanding of what cannot be controlled in our lives. I am also experimenting with stamping on fabrics such as corduroy, velvet... This method of stamping black ink on black fabric or tone on tone is subtle...It plays with the way the light is reflected. It invites the viewer to reconstruct the images with his own imagination. The work appears minimal, but it seduces the viewer to discover what's hidden within. Some are very atmospherically trapping. This series was inspired by my dreams at night... the traces of people who stay within my thoughts and dreams without physical presence in my life.



Organicirculo Omunculo, 2006, woodcut, 106 x 75 cm.

Brian: Javier, aside from the use of the circle... is there any other form of symbolism in your work? Do certain colors mean different things to you? If so, tell us about the symbolism of your work.

JA: Organic forms are very personal. A section of an earlier design is often used to create an evolutionary continuity. This is done with the concept of earlier design being the seed for a new design that grows and branches out in different directions. This forces some of the elements and shapes of my art to reappear...though I try not to repeat images. I am very critical of my work and always wish to be surprised by them.

Brian: What else has influenced your work? Do you find inspiration in the work of other artists?

JA: At first I looked for inspiration in other artists by reviewing their work in great depth. Some of those artists are Chillida, Saura, Tàpies, Goya, Kupka, Pollock, Rothko, Egon Schiele... I also looked for inspiration in architects like Zaha Hadid, Calatrava or Frank Gehry. All these artists have left a trace in me, which I incorporate into my work. But now I am also finding my inspirations in nature, fractals and everything else that I find surprising in life.

Brian: Javier, I understand that you are an educator as well. Where have you taught? Can you tell us about that experience and how it influences your personal work?

JA: I have some teaching experience. I have been one of the printmaking instructors at the CIEC Foundation (www.fundacionciec.com) in the city of La Coruna in Spain. That's where I've taught my wood engraving technique. I have also taught classes at the University of Fine Arts in Madrid. I am currently doing research with a grant from the Ministry of Education and Science of Spain for my doctoral thesis. However, teaching is not my primary occupation. I wish to work in a field that leaves me more time to create.

Brian: What advice do you have for art students?

JA: The first thing I want to say to them is to work hard towards achieving a goal. Broaden your knowledge of art by traveling and seeing and experiencing the world. Stay open minded to different ways and cultures. An art student needs to come to the realization of all things within himself...on his own time and own place.



Organicirculo Conexion Oculta, 2006, woodcut, 100 x 70 cm.

Brian: Do you have any exhibits planned for 2008?

JA: In January I am exhibiting in Móstoles, near Madrid after having exhibited in Münster, Germany and London in recent months. In May and June I will exhibit with other Spanish graphic artists in the gallery Arthaus66 (www.arthaus66.com) in Albuquerque, New Mexico and again in Münster Germany later on.

Brian: Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about your work?

JA: I feel fortunate to make art. Through art, my life has become very exciting and I've met many wonderful people. Art has made my life magical and brought me many surprises.