

## Ruta Sempere/ Sempere's Route

We present a route to discover Eusebio Sempere's artistic tracks in the city of Alicante.

This Alicante artist, born in Onil, universal ambassador of our city and its contemporary culture, showed a great generosity with the province's capital that saw his birth. Not for nothing, he freely donated to the city his own contemporary art collection, with which the Museum of la Asegurada was created, source of the current Alicante's Contemporary Art Museum (MACA), a pioneering museum of its kind. Sempere was awarded the Medal to the merit of the Arts, was one of the first Spaniards in exhibiting his works at the MOMA, a representative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modernity and contemporary culture in Spain. Sempere's work has decorated from music festivals' stages to some film scenes of the Star Wars' "The Empire Strikes Back".

It is not just a route for people visiting us. The Alicante's citizens have the chance to rediscover the impact of the Onil's genius on their city, how Semperian geometries surround us and are part of our urban and daily environment. From sculptures in squares to the pavement of a promenade, including the classical façade of the Airport, the driving force of the local economy. Therefore, we should break oversight and recover the proud of being a Semperian city forever.

This memory and oversight decreased in the last years. It was forgotten that Sempere is, together with Óscar Esplá, the only civilian buried in the Monastery of the Santa Faz (his gravestone was removed to include an exhibition and never came back). This route should serve as new period of Alicante's renewed esteem for Sempere's work, the restitution of his sculpture of a star, as well as the renaming of the AVE train station with his name.

From the Culture Ministry we think that the relationship of Eusebio Sempere with the city of Alicante has to be valued and emphasized. We are convinced that through it we can create an artistic and civic unique identity for Alicante. Sempere has to have a role similar to the one that Joaquín Sorolla has in Valencia or Antoni Gaudí in Barcelona. These artists' work not only helps to remark their cities on the art map, but they are also a source of touristic attraction, and, thus, economic revitalizers.

Lastly, Sempere's route is completed by the Spanish Civil War Victims' Monument, who could not escape through the Alicante's harbour. The fact that this city, that also wants to create an identity through its History Memory, chooses Sempere; with whom it has a memory debt to pay; to remember the point in which the Spanish Civil War concluded he creates and communicates a powerful metaphor and helps to close a circle as perfect as Semperian geometries.

You should get off the train at Eusebio Sempere's train station, admire the Star, walk by the Óscar Esplá Promenade, get the TRAM until the Pyramid at the Isleta and the bus to Airport. Take up as many as you can!

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## **EUSEBIO SEMPERE (ONIL, ALICANTE, 1923-1985)**

Eusebio Sempere is the most internationally known Alicante artist and one of the most relevant Spanish artists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work, which is always about the geometric abstraction, sometimes kinetic and other more lyric and of landscape theme, shows an artistic career of a perfect coherence. His works are the result of a rigorous and continuous work on geometric form, optical illusion and the sense of movement, although they all have a peculiar lyricism and a great formal beauty.

He was born in Onil, a small industrial city of the Alicante province in 1923 in a humble family of artisans, but he studied in Valencia, at the San Carlos Art School, where modern art teaching was forbidden. He went then to Paris where he settled for twelve years, getting rid of the restrictive atmosphere of the Spanish culture. There he met personally some of the survivors of the Avant-garde as Braque or Arp, he acquired the knowledge of the modern art basis with the works of Kandinsky, Mondrian or Klee, but he related, due to creative similarity, to the most constructivist, optical and kinetic artists of the art gallery Denise René. In the French capital he developed his own abstract geometric language, leaving figuration forever, which is displayed on his magnificent series of gouaches on cardboard.

Years later, in 1960 he came back to Spain and settled in Madrid with Abel Martín, his faithful and loyal mate, whom he had met in Paris and from whom he never separated until he died. Without leaving geometric abstraction, his work goes through the Castile landscape, acquiring forms, textures and colours from the group of formalist friends with whom he related around the Cuenca's Abstract Art Museum or at the gallery Juana Mordó of Madrid. He became famous and successful attends biennials, as well as national and international exhibitions. Moreover, he got involved in one of the most beautiful Spanish art adventures, being one of the first convinced builders of modernity: the creation of the Cuenca's Abstract Art Museum, the cybernetic art of the Calculum Centre of the University of Madrid, the design and origin of the Outdoors Sculpture Museum of the Paseo de la Castellana or his own Museum of la Asegurada thanks to the donation of his contemporary art works to the city of Alicante.

Sempere is the Favourite Son of the province, Adoptive Son of the city of Alicante, Honorary Doctor by the University of Alicante, Golden Medal to the Arts and Príncipe de Asturias de las Artes Prize. He died in Onil in 1985, victim of a grave degenerative illness.

## **MACA, ALICANTE CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM**

The Alicante Contemporary Art Museum is located in the historic centre of the city, opposite the the monumental Santa María basilica. It is an important building that encompasses a whole city block and includes the restrained volume of the la Casa de la Asegurada (House of la Asegurada), the most ancient civil building of the city, built in 1685 as a wheat granary and also the most relevant example of the Valencian Baroque.

The Alicante Contemporary Art Museum is the heir of the la Asegurada Museum , which was opened in 1977 thanks to Eusebio Sempere's enterprising spirit who wanted to donate his private art collection to the city, in a great act of generosity. Sempere strongly believed in the art democratizing ideal, taking the artist's social responsibility, and he found an institution, the Alicante City Council, which in that historical moment of democratic transition, welcomed the project enthusiastically and made it true. La Asegurada Museum was one of the first contemporary art museums of Spain.

The Alicante artist desired to create a museum with his own collection, and the Alicante City Council accepted the proposal. Sempere fell into debt in order to acquire the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century artists' works. "I am going to Paris to buy certain paintings that the collection needs" he said

excitedly on a letter to Ambrosio Luciáñez, then the city's major "... other works I have reserved in art galleries of Madrid and Paris are waiting for me to pay them when I have money enough to do it. I have put for sale a site that I have near Madrid and whose sell depends on many circumstances. I make everything I have, and that I kept for my old age, available to you and the city of Alicante, but I am not a multimillionaire to decide quickly the boughts missing and that came to fifteen million pesetas. I am receiving money from Switzerland and I will make available another amount of money for the collection.

Sempere gathered over time and from his privileged position of great artist and intimate friend of great artists, a series of high-quality works that form the primary core of this Collection. Nevertheless, since the announcement of his intention of creating a Contemporary Art Museum in Alicante on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1976, he made a highly relevant personal effort with the aim of obtaining the works of those artists that he considered imprescindible in a 20<sup>th</sup> century art collection. With a refined personal taste, an exceptional future vision and a great emotional exhaustion, Sempere immersed himself in a frenetic activity of purchases, transfers, exchanges and self-production commitments until he gathered a really splendid selection of pieces, chosen with rigour and good judgement. Besides, he prepared every museum detail: light, walls paint, works location, frames, pamphlets, the museum's advertising poster, invitations... everything necessary to turn the museum into a work of its own.

All together looked for the most appropriate place, the Casa de la Asegurada and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1977, the museum was opened with the presence of the Culture minister Pío Cabanillas, in one of the country's most important cultural ceremonies, attended by all great artists, who were Sempere's friends and they were present in his Collection for the museum. All of them were proud of his friend Eusebio and all wanted to accompany him in this brave act of reference in a period of historical relevance, where the fact of founding and opening a contemporary art museum acquired the importance of a committed political act.

In his declarations to the press, Sempere stated "Having this and gift it is not bad, but I am happy. I had many things at home, but I have bought a lot of artistic works and I owe them all, because I have changed the majority of paintings by my own ones, but I have to paint them first. I have to rush home to paint in order to finish paying them."

More than 30 years later and after a deep and radical change, the new Contemporary Art Museum, MACA, opened in 2011, giving value to the collection that Eusebio Sempere donated to the city and gathering many people's continuous effort and determination over time. All of them put in enthusiasm, effort, work, ideas and projects so as this dream of Sempere and of all Alicante citizens came true.

The MACA is one of the most important cultural equipments of the city, property of the Alicante City Council, although the restoration and construction project of the new building was funded by the Generalitat Valenciana. Built according to the project of the Architecture Firm Sancho-Madrilejos, it has a total area of 4.680 m<sup>2</sup> and it is structured in four floors over ground level and two basements. It has a temporary exhibitions room and four rooms for the exhibition of permanent collections, as well as a library, an assembly hall, warehouses, management offices, security squad and spaces for didactics, reserves, warehouses and workshops. The museum exhibition rooms are wide spaces filled with light where the museum's varied and rich contemporary art collections are exhibited, following a rigorous museographic program where conservation and didactics are a priority.

## **“COMO UNA ESTRELLA” (“LIKE A STAR”)**

The roundabout that links the great avenues of Maisonnave, Salamanca, Óscar Esplá and Aguilera, on the new expansion district, includes a great fountain whose aim is to contain an Eusebio Sempere's sculpture titled “Como una estrella” (Like a star”).

“Como una estrella” (“Like a star”) by Eusebio Sempere changes the memorial sense of Alicante's public sculpture. With new materials, closer to industry than to art and with the incorporation of movement, it is the first modern sculpture that Alicante place on its streets on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1978.

However, this was not its first location. The sculpture also served as a fountain's ending placed on the Portal de Elche in 1978 since some years later it was removed and kept in a warehouse.

The city's will was to rescue it and include it in the public space and thanks to the architect's Alfonso Ybarra Huesa's project the sculpture was integrated in its current space. In the explicative report of 1955 it is stated the importance given to the sculpture itself and to the urban area that should take it in, and to the dialogue between them. The project is the result of an intense study (AMA, Contratación, Leg. 1055-1. Additional Project to the Fountain for Eusebio Sempere's sculpture “Como una estrella” (“Like a star”)).

“Como una estrella” (“Like a star”) is a twelve-face polyhedron with 45 cm five-sided sides. From each one an specific number of tubes of 3cm of diameter spread from the upper face. They are made of polished stainless steel. The polyhedron is placed on an 6 cm axis of diameter and 3 metres high that is hold on an iron base. Thereby, the sculpture remains isolated in the space reaching a total height of 5 metres by 3 metres wide. It is moved due to an electric mechanism incorporated in it.

The architect reflected: “In this work the optical-kinetic movement offers the observer the chance to participate, what is playful becomes fundamental. The sculpture's reading is always variable, the atmosphere that surrounds the “star” becomes part of it”. Effectively, with new materials colser to the industry than to art, looks for the endless light reflection, involving the espectador in the work, with an abstract shape that does not remind any reality fragment and with the incorporation of movement... “Como una estrella” (“Like a star”) changes the commemorative sense of the public sculpture of the city of Alicante.

In order to enjoy this sculpture properly and make a correct interpretation it was necessary “ to introduce Sempere's work within an element that allowed for obtaining the proper relationship between the surrounding space and the unique element”. This was possible because the buidings facing the square were far enough to the centre of it, but what was necessary then was to give a space to the sculpture.

The establishment criteria should be strict and respectful with the sculpture made of stainless steel as a single material, adapting to armony conditions and proportions, to the conditions of simplicity in the use of materials, absence of verticality that competed with the sculpture itself, sense of buoyancy of the piece in the air and the important presence of the water and light “as an immediate referent to the mediterranean character of Sempere's work”. The element chosen to relate the work with its surrounding its a fountain and water is the dialogue vehicle.

The fountain has a circular shape that coincides with the sculpture's rotational movement. “A subtle leaning surface by which a thin layer of water runs (with the shape of a truncated cone) is concluded on the upper part by a vegetal surface and above it, in a emerging direction, “the star” is set, which is powerfully lighted up from up/down, laying over laminar glass”. This surface where water runs is composed of 60 plates of “platinum blue” granite with metallic aspect, arranged in such a way that

the channels they have create the effect of movement. Water appears on the upper part due to overflowing and after falling by the slope, it is free and falls over the horizontal place in order to be gathered and rised again. Between the water surface and the sculpture, an upper lawn finishing represents nature as opposed to all the cold elements used and it is also a transition between water and the sculpture. Everything in the fountain is mathematics and proportion, from the five-sided sculpture with five faces, the proportion 12x5 has served as a scale for the rest of elements. The water surface perimeter has 60 metres, the employed plates are 60 and the slope is 12 degrees.

In this fountain light is very important: under the sculpture, powerful spotlights light up the tubes that, thanks to the rotation movement and the slope degree, produce multiple unpredictable effects. At the same time, a fiber optic wire lights up the water perimeter.

The project was passed and the fountain was opened in the Plaza de la Estrella (Star square) in 1996. The first location of this sculpture in the Portal de Elche was chosen by the artist himself; it was a simple and modest location where the work was surrounded by high ficus and it coincided with a tumultuous historical period, the one in 1978, and sociopolitical and cultural conditions that influenced any of the measures taken, which grew on relevance and emotivity. Sempere gifted the city an sculpture to locate in one of its squares, after having donated an exceptional art collection for the creation of one of the first Contemporary Art Museums of Spain.

In this new place, the sculpture, thanks to the location proposal carried out by the architect Alejandro Ybarra, accomplishes deservedly the tribute to the city that the artist wanted to materialise: ...This kind of works are hard and provoke a lot of worries and I hope that if currently they are not very understood the future generation will understand them. This work is of all Alicante's citizens and I hope they take care of it" (Arderius Pirula "Como una estrella en movimiento" ("Like a star in motion"), Diario Información, Alicante, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1977).

Throughout the time that has passed by, we have learnt to look at it and consider this sculpture as one of the usual images of the urban landscape. Linked forever to the run of water, we enjoy the constant circular movement that is remembered by a whole citizens' generation that have forgotten the controversy about the location of this sculpture either in the Portal de Elche or in this Plaza de la Estrella, a generation who is in a permanent debt to Eusebio Sempere.

Eusebio Sempere (Onil, Alicante, 1923-1985) is the most internationally known Alicante artist and one of the most relevant Spanish artists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work always about geometrical abstraction, sometimes kinetic and others more lyric and of a lanscape theme, shows an artistic career of a perfect coherence. His works are the result of a rigurous and continuous work about the geometrical form, the optical illusion and the movement sense, although they have a very particular lyricism and a great formal beauty.

Master of all Alicante's artists, Sempere was always related to Alicante and it is possible to trace his steps through the city. His continuous visits and relationships with public and private institutions contributed to the modernization of the city in the 70s and the Alicante artist himself encouraged many projects, some of them failed and others were sucessful. Moreover, he was one of the best city's ambassadors worldwide.

As his last will, Eusebio Sempere stated that when he died he should be buried in the Monasterio de la Santa Faz (la Santa Faz Monastery), closely to the sacred relic, remaining forever in this place, Alicante.

## ÓSCAR ESPLÁ AVENUE'S PAVEMENT

Óscar Esplá Avenue, which is a broken boulevard, is a magnificent example of the application of artistic parameters applied to the urban furniture and to the city's scene. Eusebio Sempere, as designer of an art possible city, projected the pavement of the of the Óscar Esplá Avenue in 1977 and suggested a simple geometrical design but of great formal efficiency that would replace a classical design that was already projected. The scarce artists' intervention on the cities' shape is exemplified excellently here in a period when urbanism and the city's aesthetics was not the main worry of a society that was barely democratic. However, for Sempere, it was.

The first announcement appears on the last sentence of a letter addressed to the Alicante's major then, Ambrosio Lucíañez: “The drawings for the Alicante's pavement have not been finished, but everything arrives” (Alicante's Municipal Archive, Head Office, Box 6). And it arrived, because on a letter of the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1977 Sempere tells “I think that I did not explained well the intention of the drawings I handed to you for the avenue's pavement. You may do it either flat, in two blue colours, one light and the other dark (that is different blues) or a bit caved in as in other samples and keeping the two different blues (drawings). If you have any inconvenient write to me and if it is complicated you may do a conventional pavement” (Alicante's Municipal Archive, Head Office, Box 6).

But the major was deeply convinced of the project's modernity so he heard the necessary documents and he gave the precise instructions for the paving of Óscar Esplá Avenue -one of the most important streets that will give fluency and elegance to the new city-, was made following Eusebio Sempere's design. The result was an adaptation of the original drawing that the artist drew on a squared paper. Each grid represented a floor tile and on it the parallel lines that form the drawing where drawn,

In the Alicante's Municipal Archive (Archivo Municipal de Alicante, Obras y Proyectos, Olim 1546, 2A-128/3, 1978. Proyecto de pavimentado del Paseo Central de la Avda. Óscar Esplá) the drawings, reports and memoir that highlights the splendid work of a plastic artist as Sempere when designing a pavement. The instructions given in the project memoirs: “Using fine materials, as the high-quality terrazzo, forming drawings, designed by the Alicante artist D. Eusebio Sempere, donor besides, of the works present in the recently created museum of the house called “la Asegurada”. (...) The drawing is formed by rectangles and octagons in the centre, forming between them rectangular bands with light and powerful blue tones. Pieces will be of 40x40x3 cms. “Terrazzo vibrato relief”.

The Diario Información published in January 1978 the piece of news, highlighting the artist's attitude with the city of Alicante: “And always leaving his mark in Alicante, Eusebio Sempere has committed to design the pavement of the central promenade of the whole Óscar Esplá Avenue. They are pieces in two tones of blue, one more lighter and the other darker, the painter explained and they will be arranged giving the sense of light changes. We considered that is was not more expensive to do something artistic, different form what is sold in businesses and we have already started the work” (Mirasierras, María Rosa “Eusebio Sempere designs the the Óscar Esplá Avenue's pavement, Diario Información, Alicante, 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1978).

The original project conceived the avenue's total length as a single design: three equal central scenes which consisted of a square laying over a vertex included in a rectangle, both of them formed through parallel lines. The three scenes where joined among them by a new rectangle where four squares were included. The design was closed on both sides by a semicircle of parallel lines whose centre was filled by each central scene's half square, repeating, thus, the main motif.

Over time the pavement has suffered relevant changes that have altered its original aspect.

## METALLIC RELIEF. ALICANTE-ELCHE AIRPORT

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1983, the Transport, Turism and Communications Ministry opened its new facilities at the Alicante-Elche airport, including the arrivals and departures terminal in whose facade a great work of the artist Eusebio Sempere, awarded the Príncipe de Asturias de las Artes Prize that year, was installed.

It was a great wall sculpture whose development occupies a total of 80 lineal metres, composed of 76 stretcher frames of parallel sticks that form 38 grilles with different geometrical compositions each one. 34 have a square shape of 2x2 metres and 4 are circumferences of 2 metres of diameter. The grilles, made of lineal overlaped weaves, are build with rectangular tubes made of polished and anodised aluminium in order to avoid rusting. The colour of the tubes is dark bronze in order to remark the contrast with the white wall.

The artist first thought about a mobile structure, but he rejected that idea due to the strong wind that blows at that area. Nonetheless, he wanted that his work gave the sense of movement and he achieves that overlapping two stretcher frames, crossed by parallel sticks, which are in a different position in each of them.

This wall sculpture was ordered by Aviación Civil (Civil Air Force) to Eusebio Sempere in the first months of 1983 in order to be located on the north facade of the old airport's terminal. It was the artist's most ambitious work, as well as the biggest one made until that moment and it was made collaboratively with the Alicante Aluminium factory, then called *Manufacturas Metálicas del Mediterráneo*, that employed 6.000 kilograms of aluminium. The artist drew the previous sketches and established the instructions necessary for its execution, that he checked and supervised personally. "At the beginning of May, Eusebio Sempere himself went to the workshops in order to check and supervise the work's state. *We are very proud that the great Alicante artist has entrusted the making of this big wall sculpture to us-* the factories head-, to ensure that *although other artists have ordered his works at these workshops, this was after all, the most important artistic work they have done*" (Dopazo, Manuel. "Sempere's mural for the airport's facade is almost finished", *Diario Información*, Alicante, 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1893). Certainly, the aluminium factory put special interest on this project and was devoted with an exquisite care to the making of each of the pieces that composed this great *Relieve Metálico* (Metallic Relief).

Sempere did not considered himself an sculptor and he always thought that his sculptures were his paintings' direct transposition, but in different dimensions and using other material. *Paintings are a rational preview of my sculptures. Therefore, what is light on my paintings -two-dimensional space-in sculptures is materials tension in a three-dimensional space. The painting suggested movement turns into real movement in the other sculpture's space. Sculptures are the last consequences of paintings*" (Sempere's statements to Mariano Planells, *Diario de Mallorca*, Palma de Mallorca, 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1974).

The Alicante-Elche Airport wall sculpture is made of a group of grilles. These structures, so simple but so visually efficient are the first sculptures that the artist made at the beginning of the 60s and the compositional chances were unlimited. They are sculptures made of two stretch frames of parallel metallic sticks of iron painted in black, chroming steel, silver-colored, golden or in aluminium that hangs, leaving a distance between both. A subtle movement of the spectator is able to create the optical effect illusion called *moaré* and movement.

The Airport wall sculpture was dismantled in 1993 in order to start the complex extension works and it remained 18 years stored. After a complex restoration process (directed by Gertrudis Gómez), in June 2011, coinciding with the end of the airport's extension works, Aena S.A. And the

Fundación ENAIRE located the wall sculpture again on its original location, paying homage to the figure of its creator and its relationship with the province of Alicante.

The artist's presence in the Airport is completed by two works of him that can be admired in the new terminal check-in hall. The first one is a wall sculpture composed by different pieces of metallic grilles that occupies an area of 18 metres long by 2 metres high. The second is the rotatory sculpture titled "Dinámica" ("Dynamic"), made of chroming metal and of 2 metres high and a metre and a half on its widest part. It has an engine that makes it spins smoothly. Both the wall sculpture and these two artistic works are a relevant part of the Colección Aena de Arte Contemporáneo (Aena's Contemporary Art Collection).

## **GRAVE OF THE MONASTERY OF LA SANTA FAZ**

Eusebio Sempere was buried on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1985 in the sacristy's ground, next to the entrance door of the safe-keeping room of the Santa Faz, in the stone walls that form a perfect hexagon of a building as mathematical as baroque. Numbers' secret armony does not leave Sempere not even at the feet of his grave. A marble gravestone was placed on the left side of the door that gives access to the most sacred space of the Monastery.

The safe-keeping room of the Alicante's Santa Faz is located on the Monastery of the Santa Faz of Alicante as the retrochoir of the Church of the Santa Verónica, the monastery's main building located on the fertile and productive *Huerta de Alicante* (Alicante's Vegetable Garden), very close to the city, just few kilometres away from it.

The Monastery was occupied by the Gandía Order of Saint Claire since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and from that moment onwards they were under the management and maintenance of the City's Board. A papal bull of 1525 granted this religious community the privilege of celebrating the festivity of the *Rostro del Salvador* (Saviour's Countenance) and thus, the Municipal City Council established an annual religious performance within the Monastery whose expenses were payed by the city and arranges the pilgrimage that the citizens of the town already did. From then on, the festivity of the Santa Faz is celebrated (whose date has varied over time). Five centuries of pilgrimage: faith and popular tradition around a Monastery. The Monastery was built as a decision of the Municipal City Council with the aim of keeping one of the most esteemed sacred relics of the Medieval Age end: the Santa Faz. It is one of the three cloths where Christ's face was printed when Saint Veronica wiped his face off during the climb to the Calvario. The legend tells that Father Pedro Mena, dean priest of the San Juan Church, brought from Rome a portrait or figure of the Christ's Face printed on a thin silk cloth. This Veronican canvas was quickly attributed a series of miracles that are represented on the paintings that decorate the safe-keeping room of the Monastery.

The Santa Faz's safe-keeping room is a complex architectural, sculpture and pictorial set that is preserved almost as it was designed on the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has an hexagonal floor covered by sexpartite truncated pyramid shaped dome and it was profusely decorated with golden and polychromatic carvings and big canvases embedded on a wood baseboard and a colourful marble floor. It is the result of an iconographic thought about, conceived and thought by its creators; the appropriate place to keep a treasure, the image of Christ's face captured on a canvas, the Santa Faz relic. The building of this particular architectural space in 1677 was made as the Municipal City Council's order, the only owner of the Monastery, becoming, thus, a work with a complex significance, a civil order with religious content.

Its building was not only the result of the 600 second half municipal political power's firm will, but also of the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church's liturgical dispositions, which, after the Trento Council, gave a great importance to the relics worship. According to these premises, on the Baroque Spain spread some characteristic architectural and decorative models: small chapels as spaces full

of significance where the holy host and the incontestable and sacred relics were hidden, as if they were a treasure. Following these ideas, this side chapel, this safe-keeping room of the Santa Faz, joining magnificently architecture, sculpture and painting with an excellent iconographic program that comes from the sculptor José Villanova's carvings, Pere Joan Valero's golden and the artist Juan Conchillos' paintings.

Eusebio Sempere was buried in the Monastery following his own will and he lies next to another relevant Alicante artist, the composer Óscar Esplá, whose body is on the left side of the church's main altar and behind the safe-keeping room. Óscar Esplá and Eusebio Sempere are the two only Alicante's contemporary world people that have been buried in the Monastery close to the worshiped relic. The municipal town council, as well as the council of canons gave the corresponding permission and took minutes of it. Esplá and Sempere were no friends during their lives, at least it is not considered as so. However, since their death, few metres separate them. This is a curious coincidence. Both most internationally known Alicante artists choose since their death the same resting place, the Alicante Monastery of the Santa Faz.

The special devotion that Sempere had for the Veronican canvas is widely known, devotion that made him order the informalist Manuel Millares a work about this topic. The piece that is currently kept within the contents of the Colección Arte Siglo XX (20<sup>th</sup> Century Art Collection) and exhibited in the MACA, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Alicante (Alicante's Contemporary Art Museum) is a beautiful creation of the Canary Islander artist where the referent of the Santa Faz becomes a powerful image, a jumble of sackcloths, as well as twisted and black painted ropes splashed with the red of the Divine Face blood; a magnificent representation of the intense death captured on a piece of cloth and on the believers' faith images.

In 1989, in the celebration of the 5ht miracles Centenary, the Alicante sculptor, Arcadio Blasco, created this *Monumento a la Santa Faz* (Monument to the Santa Faz) as a tribute to his friend Eusebio Sempere. A monolith, like a comet's tail offered to the old gods, presents a circular slot that, as a niche, contains the image of the Santa Faz. At the same time, the incisions and reliefs of this mill wheel's ceramic recalls the geometries of Sempere, whom the Monument is dedicated to.

### **PYRAMID OF LA ISLETA (ALBUFERETA)**

Located on a privileged environment, the Fountain of la Isleta where the Eusebio Sempere's Pyramid is set, occupies an essential place that organises traffic and is the junction of the Villajoyosa, Albufereta and Condomina Avenues, where about 55.000 vehicles travel daily. It is an strategic place, opposite the sea, that has a great traffic and an splendid sight.

On a ellipse of 36x28 metres on its axes, Eusebio Sempere's sculpture "Pirámide" ("Pyramid") is located. The design of the square is divided into two different areas: a south area called "agua" ("water"), where all ground level water games are concentrated, and a north part called "tierra" ("ground") slightly elevated on a smooth hill, where the sculpture is set. Both areas are separated by a wall coated with granite from which emerge one hundred and sixty parabolic water dispensers that form a water curtain. In the lower level, a semi-ellipsoidal glass overed by a "rejilla" ("grille") (tramex) of galvanized steel from which sixteen water dispensers of melt-water, that with water remind the shape of the "Pirámide" ("Pyramid"), emerges.

In the "tierra" ("ground"), over a four-sided granite pedestal and surrounded by a landscaped area, the "Pirámide" ("Pyramid") is located. It is a sculpture of 3x3 metres, work of the Alicante artist Eusebio Sempere, made in 1993 according to a 1968 original sketch.

It is a piece of great dimensions and a weight of one thousand four hundred kilograms, designed as a public sculpture; a chroming sculpture with a basis, that takes a risk betting on volume and shape,

but separating the work from the ground and providing it with the mechanical movement that gives it lightness. The four-sided basis of 10x300x300 cm. Has a series of holes where each one of the sticks that form the shape are introduced. Volume is achieved through the repetition of a piece, a chroming steel stick of 3 centimetres circular shape that ends with crosswise cuts and is located on a perpendicular way to the basis. This piece, repeated since a total of 685 sticks is reached, increases gradually in height until its peak in the centre of the piece and descends gradually on the four sides forming a pyramid. The number of sticks, which shows, as in all the artist's works, the importance of mathematical calculation is the following: 1 stick of 260,5 cm., 4 sticks of 248 cm., 8 sticks of 236,5 cm., 12 sticks of 224 cm., 16 sticks of 212,5 cm., 20 sticks of 200,5 cm., 24 sticks of 188,5 cm., 28 sticks of 175,5 cm., 32 sticks of 164,5 cm., 36 sticks of 152,5 cm., 40 sticks of 140,5 cm., 44 sticks of 128,5 cm., 48 sticks of 116,5 cm., 52 sticks of 104,5 cm., 56 sticks of 92,5 cm., 60 sticks of 80,5 cm., 64 sticks of 68,5 cm., 68 sticks of 56,5 cm. And 72 sticks of 42 cm.

The sculpture is mounted on an engine through an axis that provides rotational movement, allowing, besides, that the platform flies over the ground where it is placed.

Eusebio Sempere conceives his sculptures outdoors as almost immaterial realizations. In them, he looks for mathematical exactitude, optical effects, light's reflection and movement. They are calmed sculptures that have to be looked at with the same attitude. They do not require the spectator to turn around them, but it is the movement itself, included in the structure, which defines rotation. Achieve technical perfection is one of the artist's aims, who chooses a building material as chroming steel instead of iron, able to absorb and expand light in many changing reflections: this way movement is multiplied, which was Sempere's intention.

There are two exemplars of this Pyramid that were made in 1993 due to the exhibition "Eusebio Sempere", Casa das Artes, Vigo, 1993 commissioned by Abel Martín. One of these sculptures is installed on the Valencia Technical College's Architecture Superior Technical School's Garden. The other sculpture is part of the Alicante City Council collection and was donated as addendum to the works acquisition of the artist in 1997. It is the one that has been located on the Isleta of the Albufereta roundabout, opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, after an urbanisation project.

From then on, light reflects and stops in the entangled passages of an sculpture that modifies, forever, the place where it is placed.

### **AVE TRAIN STATION: ALICANTE – EUSEBIO SEMPERE**

Every train station becomes the entrance to a city and through it many tourists and citizens who use the train as means of transport, circulate. This is the first image that the visitor obtains from the place he/she arrives and the last image he gets when he/she goes. It is a welcome and a farewell, an intentions statement.

Alicante's train station, called Alicante – Terminal (in Valencian and co-officially Alacant – Terminal) or historically Alicante – Término is the main train station of the city of Alicante. It was built in 1858 as terminal station by the company MZA Madrid-Zaragoza-Alicante and it was opened by the queen Elizabeth II in an environment that today is located at the downtown, connected to the great roads of the city. The train station includes train services of Long and Medium Distance and it is also the head of the C-1 and C-3 lines of the commuter train network Murcia-Alicante.

The high speed line LAV Madrid-Levante is a line of the Spanish railway network that has a double track of standard or international wide (1435 mm) and that allows a maximum speed of 350 km/h. The high speed service AVE in the train station Alicante – Terminal was opened on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 and provided, in just one year, 1.732.000 travellers with service.

The majority of Spanish cities traditionally name their train stations with the toponim of the place where they are located, since it is not usual to give train stations the proper name of politicians, artists or people of letters. However, this situation is being changed. New train stations, specially those associated to high speed services, are infrastructures that have become authentic monuments of the future and are being used to pay homage to relevant personalities of the city.

It is a more extended and common practice in the south and in the east, where many cities have used the name of the train station to pay homage to relevant personalities, giving their name to the terminals. This is the case of the train station Orihuela – Miguel Hernández, as a tribute to the poet born in this Alicante city; the train station Valencia – Joaquín Sorolla, as a tribute to the Valencian painter; Cuenca's train station, called Cuenca – Fernando Zóbel, 20<sup>th</sup> century painter, founder of the Cuenca's Abstract Art Museum or the train station Málaga – María Zambrano, dedicated to the philosopher and essayist, before called Málaga – Término.

The Alicante City Council's plenary session of the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, decided by majority suggesting the Ministry of Development calling the new AVE train station as Alicante – Eusebio Sempere as a tribute to Eusebio Sempere Juan (Onil, Alicante 1923-1985), the most internationally known Spanish artist and one of the most important artistic personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century second half Spanish art. Many reasons have been given to ask the Ministry of Development, ADIF (Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias/ Railway Infrastructure Manager) and even AVANT (Alta Velocidad de Alicante/ Alicante's High Speed) for the new naming of the AVE train station as ALICANTE – EUSEBIO SEMPERE. It is not only a way of highlighting the aesthetic achievements of one of the most brave Spanish creators, but also his essential role in the building of modernity in a country culturally behind, and above all, very specially, the generous gesture to his fellow citizens, the donation of his art collection to the city of Alicante for the creation in 1977 of one of the first contemporary art museums of Spain, in a hard time as the Spanish transition to democracy was.

The Alicante City Council, with this proposal of naming the AVE train station with the name of Eusebio Sempere, wants to emphasize and recognize the worth of his figure and compensate for the possible ingratitude of the city towards the artist. Everyone will associate forever the city of Alicante with Sempere and the new and current name of the train station, Alicante – Eusebio Sempere, will probably awake people's interest and curiosity about this artist.

### **EL PÁJARO (THE BIRD). PROJECT OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE FOR THE RECOVERING OF THE HISTORICAL MEMORY. PROJECT FOR THE ALICANTE HARBOUR'S PIER.**

This sculpture called *El Pájaro* (The Bird), from which we preserve a series of sketches of the artist himself, was created in the year 1976 in order to be made of a great size. A trial of it of 1 metre high was done and exhibited at the Madrid's Crystal Palace. Of this sculpture, a series of small copies was made. They are kept in private collections and the original sculpture is one of the most figuratives of the artist.

After Sempere's death, Abel Martín copied this sculpture, but on a bigger size for the city of Alcoy in 1987. It was on the bridge designed by the architect Fernández Ordóñez, the same who had the Castellana Bridge and wanted to conclude this great civil engineering work with an sculpture of Eusebio Sempere, whom he deeply admired.

*El Pájaro* (The Bird) is a hanging sculpture thanks to a stick that holds up a block of three cubic bodies in whose faces there are some cylindrical sticks of different sizes situated in different slope degrees. The result is a more disordered geometrical structure but of great formal efficacy that is similar to a bird species.

It is the sculpture chosen by the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Alicante* (Association for the Recovering of Alicante's Historical Memory) in order to pay homage to the people who departed from the Alicante's harbour on the last ship that moved exiles at the end of the Spanish Civil War, the *Stanbrook*. Alicante's harbor was blocked by the general Franco's army and attacked by the Nazi Germany air force, four days before the end of the Spanish Civil War, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1939, the *Stanbrook* left, a coal ship that, defying the orders it had, took in all the civilians it was possible to board. Nevertheless, 15.000 people were trapped at the Alicante's harbour and sent to concentration camps.

It will be at the Harbour where this new version of Sempere's *El Pájaro* (The Bird) will be located as a tribute to the sad episode that took place there.

## **EUSEBIO SEMPERE AND THE CITY OF ALICANTE**

The Alicante artist born in Onil always considered that Alicante was very important in his vital and artistic career and his relationships with the city's institutions and people were numerous. Since the first works exhibition together with the also Alicante artists Arcadio Blasco and Juana Francés in 1971, his visits to the city became more usual and numerous and his friendships stronger.

He was the master of other Alicante artists and participated on juries, went to meetings of cultural character, created the Professorship of Kinetic Art of the Eusebio Sempere Art and Communication Centre of the Alicante's Council, participated and collaborated actively on the modernization of the city in the 70s and he encouraged many projects in Alicante, some of them failed and other succeeded.

In January 1976, he announced publicly that he wanted to donate his art works collection, those he owned and other he will acquire, to the city of Alicante so as its citizens could know contemporary art. He did so and with the Colección Arte Siglo XX (20<sup>th</sup> Century Collection) the Museum of la Asegurada was opened in 1977. It was one of the first contemporary art museums in Spain. Nowadays, the Collection forms the essence of the MACA, the Alicante's Contemporary Art Museum and includes works of great quality and international character of the best 20<sup>th</sup> century artists.

The same day that the donation of this collection was signed, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1978, the artist gifted the sculpture *Como una estrella* (Like a star) to the city. This piece was firstly located at the Portal de Elche and since 1997 it was placed close to the Alicante's train station. It was one of the sculptures that would have been part of a wider project of the Outdoors Sculpture Museum that was never carried out, idea of the artist himself.

Moreover, as a tribute to this city, the artist wanted to dedicate a magnificent folder of 9 serigraphs to Alicante with selected texts of Gabriel Miró extracted from his novels and very well translated into geometrical abstraction. It was the folder called *Homenaje a Gabriel Miró* (Homage to Gabriel Miró) edited by the Alicante's Italia Gallery in 1978.

In other of his generous gestures to the city, Sempere also designed in 1978 the Pavement of Óscar Esplá Avenue, a wide street that starts at the Plaza de la Estrella, called so for including on its centre, its own mobile sculpture. He also ennobled the facade of the Airport Alicante-Elche's terminal with a great wall sculpture.

Years later, the Alicante institutions gave him the title of Favourite Son of the Province and Adopted Son of the city. Besides, he was named Honorary Doctor by the University of Alicante.

As his last will, Eusebio Sempere established that at his death, he wanted to be buried in the Monastery of the Santa Faz, close to the sacred relic. Near there, since 2008, a great Pyramid spins endlessly opposite the Albufereta beach in a crossroads and history intersection. In order not to forget Sempere's history.