

# The Birth of Cuevas's Impure Animals

Isaac Masri\*



Victor Hugo Vizuetti

▲ *Impure Animal IX*, 2.00 x 1.90 x .55 m, 2001 (bronze).



Elicé Montiel

▲ *Impure Animal III*, 2.50 x 1.60 x .60 m, 2001 (bronze). ▶



Victor Hugo Vizzuett

In 1991, José Luis Cuevas traveled to Seville to prepare an exhibition that he had presented a year before at the Mudéjar Pavilion in that Andalusian city with the title “Houses of Jewry”, inspired in the name of the hotel he was staying at. I was lucky enough then to be able to closely follow the project’s preparations and I proposed including a book of engravings by the artist and poems by José-Miguel Ullán.

According to both of them, friends since 1975, they spoke little about the details of this joint book, since they were too busy talking about Valdés Leal, Tongolele and Góngora. However, when Cuevas returned to Mexico, he brought with him 25 unpublished poems by Ullán, and the determination to do the same number of engravings. I tried my best to encourage the artist in this endeavor, and his efforts fortunately came to a felicitous end, and to ensure that the book, *Animales impuros* (Impure Animals), be central to the 1992 Seville Universal Exhibition.

After the exciting experience of “Freedom in Bronze,”<sup>1</sup> in which first-rate painters, including Cuevas, took on the challenge of sculpting, Cuevas continued this work, creating 15 sculptures of impure animals. These were exhibited

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Elsie Montiel

◀ *Impure Animal I*, 2.75 x 2.05 x .60 m, 2001 (bronze). ▶

“These impure animals in some way are characters undergoing a metamorphosis, and in that sense I would say that they reflect a close relationship to the work of Kafka.”

very successfully in Madrid for the first time in the framework of a Cuevas anthology curated by José-Miguel Ullán in 1998 at the prestigious Queen Sofía National Art Center Museum.

From then until now, this extraordinary exhibit has been shown on Mexico City’s Reforma Avenue; on La Virgin Boulevard in Morelia; at the State of Mexico Cultural Institute in the city of Toluca; at the Cervantino Festival in Guanajuato; in the Festival of the Souls in the Bravo Valley; in the Arms Plaza of the city of Querétaro; at the National Polytechnic Institute, Zacatenco campus; and on the National Autonomous University of Mexico’s Rector’s Esplanade.

The next place that will host the itinerant exhibition is the atrium of the San Francisco Church in Mexico City’s Historic Center, a magnificent sculptural venue where “Impure Animals” will continue its dialogue with viewers. **NMM**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> An itinerant sculpture exhibition that began in 2000 on Mexico City’s Reforma Avenue. Each of the 11 participating artists, including Juan Soriano, Leonora Carrington, José Luis Cuevas, Vicente Rojo, Manuel Felguérez and Gunther Gerzso, contributed eight sculptures to be exhibited in public places. [Editor’s Note.]



Victor Hugo Vizuetti