

Arts

Sculptor goes for tension in his work, like that between couple making love

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LESS is more for minimalist Spanish sculptor Enric Pladevall who is staging his first one-man show here at the Fort Canning Centre Gallery today.

The 43-year-old Catalan was one of the artists commissioned by the Spanish government to turn Barcelona into a showcase of contemporary public art prior to the staging of the 1992 Olympics there.

Other sculptors such as Antoni Tapies, Eduardo Chillida, Xavier Corbero, Andres Nagel, Beverly Pepper, Byran Hunt and Aiko Miyawaki were also involved.

With eight public works dispersed all over Spain and a project for the 1996 Cultural Olympiad in Atlanta in the United States pending, the sculptor expresses amazement at the dearth of public art here.

"Singapore is such a successful and modern city; all it needs is some public art to make the city more enjoyable and beautiful," he suggests in halting English. He picked up the language during his two-year stint as an artist-in-residence in a New York college a decade ago.

Like his English, his skills as a sculptor are also self-taught. He had no formal art education and started learning sculpture at 25 by holding apprenticeship under various artisans.

He says: "I learnt more about iron-casting and melding, wood-carving and other metalwork than any art college can teach me."

Pladevall's art is at the centre of Catalonia's cultural renaissance after the dictatorship of Francisco Franco from 1936-75. During that period, the young Pladevall "wrote Spanish in school but spoke Catalan at home" and was later involved in anti-Franco demonstrations.

Twenty years on, you can hardly find any trace of that hot-blooded youth in the mild-mannered man. "Now," he says, "sculpture is on my mind 24 hours a day."

While citing painter Joan Miró, artist Pablo Picasso and ar-

chitect Gaudi as his favourite artists, Pladevall says that he draws his references from "everything in life, from science, architecture, technology, organic, philosophy".

He adds: "I usually work with two or three materials and try to make my work simple. I'm more concerned with shape. A work is not considered finished until I get its shape perfect."

In his work *Planeta*, which is 2 m tall, a hollow tree trunk is cast partly in a copper bullet-shaped tube.

"Wood is an organic material and copper a metal. I like to combine totally different materials in such a way that it gives an element of tension to my work, something like the tension between a couple making love."

When asked why he called his work *Planeta*, he shrugs his shoulders.

"I don't know. I work with my instincts and usually I leave my works untitled until the whole piece is completed. In fact, I leave some of them untitled even after that. But words are not important to me. I would rather let my works speak for themselves than explain them to the public."

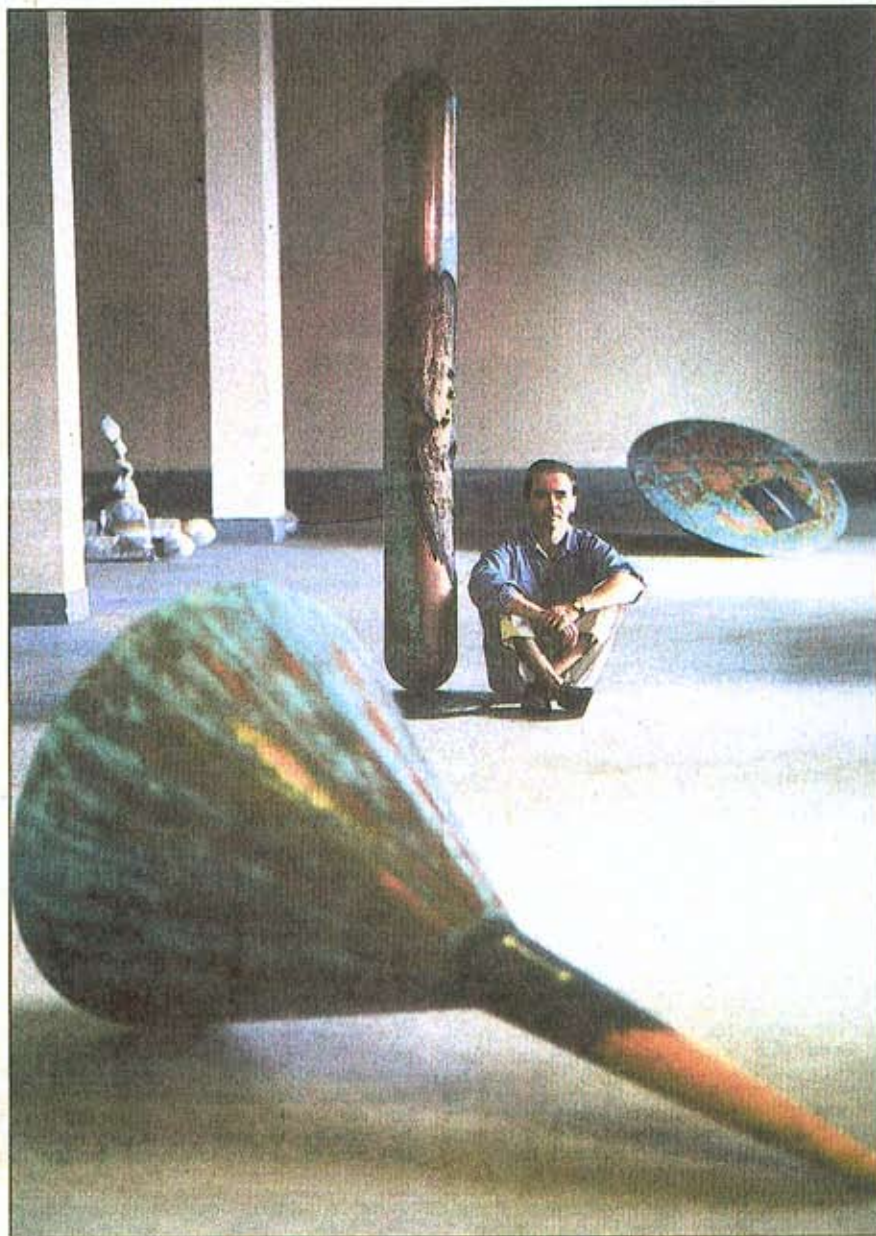
He may be a perfectionist in his craft but, in real life, the man, married to a hairdresser and who has a five-year-old daughter, says that he is very easy-going and ordinary.

"I'm not ambitious. I may not earn a lot from my sculptures but I enjoy my craft a lot and will stick to it all my life."

In the past few years, he has staged exhibitions in Italy, New York and, last year, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

His exhibition here will feature 27 sculptures, priced between US\$2,500 (S\$3,750) and US\$14,000. Proceeds will go to the Singapore Dance Theatre.

Interplay Of Tensions — The Artistic Presentations Of Enric Pladevall will be on at The Gallery in Fort Canning Centre, Fort Canning Park from today to Nov 17. Admission is free.



Self-taught Pladevall ... from left, an untitled copper, wood and lead work; *Planeta*; and *Discbolit*, an iron, copper, wood and lead creation. — Picture by ALPHONSO CHAN