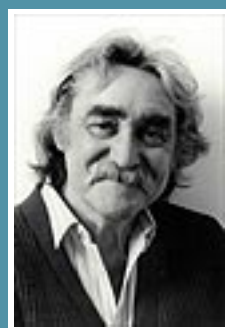


## artists

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Jesus Rafael Soto



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### interview transcript

**Date of Interview:** Jun 01, 2001

**Location:** Venezuela

**Topic:** Interview with Jesús Rafael Soto at FIA Caracas 2001

**Interviewer:** LatinArt.com

**LatinArt:** What do you consider to be the most important events in your career?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** I would speak more about situations than events, particularly about creative moments in the history of art. Of course I love the Renaissance, mythology and the art of Egypt. I love art in general. I am fascinated by art. As a child I loved art. I later started to make a living doing advertising because it was one of the few ways to make money, but I always kept my focus on my studies and going to school. I was going to a school in Maracaibo, but what really interested me was going to Europe. I loved the Impressionists and Cezanne and of course, Van Gogh and Gauguin. I was always fascinated by Cezanne. I studied him and realized that he was a very different kind of painter. He had a kind of multi-vision where he painted from different points of view and showed that movement existed in art. That was an important event.

**LatinArt:** What are some of the ideas that you have tried to explore in your work?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** There are many ideas I have explored, but participation is something that I have always been aware of. Movement is also something with a great deal of history. It was something that pre-historic man was aware of and knew how to depict. We are used to seeing in a very special way – we believe motive and inspiration have only one point of view, but we are wrong. Inspiration doesn't work that way – we don't live in a vacuum. There is no vacuum, and in all the places where we think there is one there is something very important that precedes, and that is relations. I am not talking about relations among objects or elements, but among abstract structures. Pure forms that condition all elements and are constructed as objects and forms. I am interested in the way we live. We live like a fish in water because all our circumstances and movements are conditioned by a very fluid medium, perhaps initiated by way of the Big Bang. I don't know. It is this medium that initiates the presence of constructive elements.

There is a very particular saying that art is very much like science. Science has a limit that it has to demonstrate. On the other hand, artists don't have to demonstrate anything. We don't have to demonstrate or even insinuate. No one puts me in a laboratory so I can explain why things appear the way they do. Having said this, I should add that my work always has a very realistic bond. It is a different kind of realism, but a sublime reality that is very closely associated with spirituality. I am very interested in the essence of reality, not necessarily in a formalist context.

**LatinArt:** Can you talk about your use of positive and negative space?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** Space has always been the womb of classical art. Some relate to it one way, others in another, but the most important element for a visual artist is space. For me, my interest in space is not defined. What I am interested in is a more ambiguous space. We cannot define space. It is different for each person who sees it and tries to represent it. It is a very subjective thing.

**LatinArt:** Are there any symbols or shapes that you use frequently, and why?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** I prefer not to talk of symbols, but rather of signs. Signs are abstract. They are like letters or musical notes that evolve with time. I prefer to talk of signs because if not, we fall into the trap of representational art that has rules. The harmony of color, the harmony of composition – these are ideas that are of no interest to me. It is important that forms be abstract so that they can be seen. For me abstraction is reality, synthesis, and pure form. It is like color. Color is the degeneration of absolute value, pure energy. So it cannot be any symbol of anything unless it is a consequence of energy.

**LatinArt:** How does your work speak of the human condition of the Latin American experience?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** I am happy that Latin America has responded, understood, and has begun to take a new position in the visual arts. This is something that I believe in. I think the environment is very intense. I feel that the relations that we spoke of earlier are more important than the elements. Every element becomes again relational and almost absolute.

**LatinArt:** Would you say that in some way your work directs itself to the question of identity?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** I have never had this metaphysical or psychological problem. What I really want is time. Every work – and this is characteristic of all visual artists – continues to show and reveal new possibilities and paths. There are very many paths to take. Sometimes something is foreseen, yet you will only use it twenty years later.

**LatinArt:** Can you talk a bit about the techniques that you use?

**Jesus Rafael Soto:** I work with architecture and I work in a direct way. The same applies for my large installations like the cubes in this current exhibition. I work directly on the ground and I continue adding cube by cube according to what is required. This is very direct, until everything has been distributed. It all has an order. Not necessarily the order I'm looking for, but they contain a sort of structure that constructs an abstract, non-figurative world. They don't have compositions, but a mathematical, geometrical distribution that is very exact because every element has a spatial relation to one another.

All that space is the density of space. Everyone that enters to see one of my works has a different interpretation of the space and asks, "What's happening here?" The reason for that is because there is nothing really there, only repeated elements of what I have permitted to construct. It is an infinite thing that I am investigating, and what I have is only a portion of space filled by geometry. It is nothing more than a small witness to the spatial universe.

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