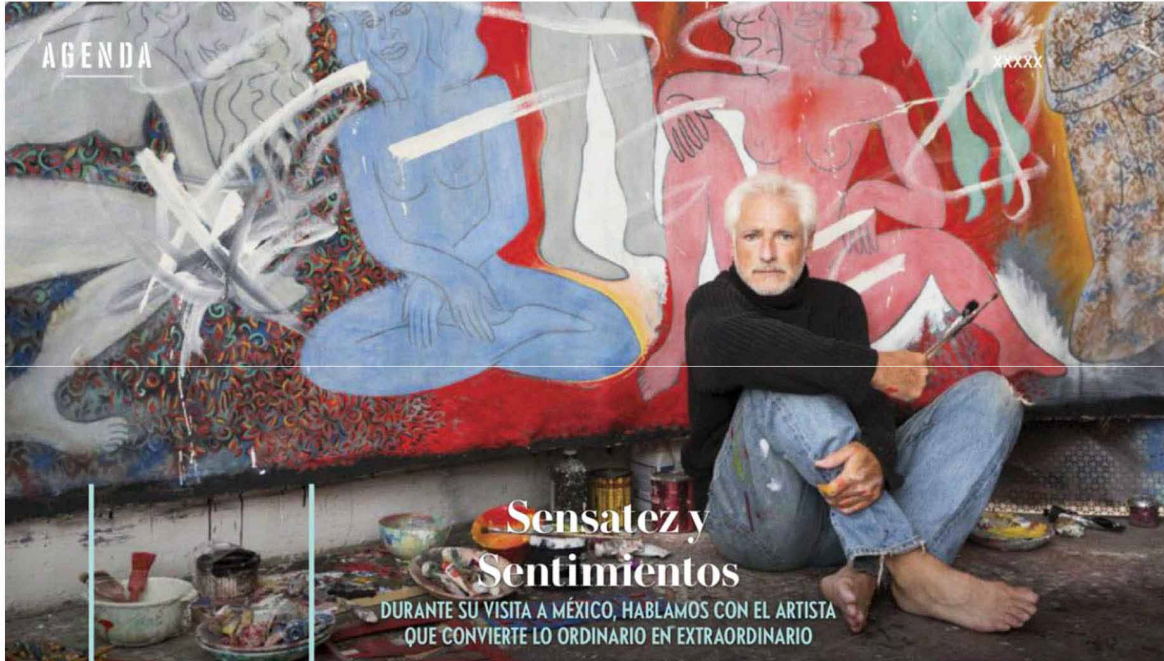


VANITY FAIR

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Sensation and Sentiment

During our visit to Mexico, we spoke with the artist that converts the ordinary into extraordinary

He has been compared to Picasso, Paul Klee and Jasper Johns which does not bother him at all. He admires them and does not deny that his work presents some influence or even an evolution of their styles. His work has been exhibited in New York (where he lives), Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, Moscow and now in Mexico City. For a unique evening in the Gallery of the Modern Art, De Jalón Fine Arts and Veuve Clicquot present the private exhibition *Musas de Cartón* to benefit the Mexican women in their fight against cancer. What is behind this outstanding night with wit and cause? Undoubtedly, an honest profile worthy of being told.

It was 1975 when Alexander Kaletski escaped from the Soviet Union to go to the United States. However, the artist would never recommend to anyone what he was able to do. "I felt like a complete stranger. Honestly, if I had known how difficult it would be, I would not have left my country. It was a very painful experience." But it was not just cultural shock; Kaletski undertook what would be - for the second time - his path to success. From being a recognized underground artist in Russia, he had to start from scratch. "I started my life again. During the first years of my life, music was the one thing that helped me get ahead."

He is best known as a painter, but has studied acting and also writes novels (until now, all with biographical tints), composes music and sculpts. A man full of talents with admirable discipline. "I practice the guitar one hour a day. Another 60 minutes I dedicate to writing, a very heavy task. Then I turn to leisure."

Alexander boasts of being privileged to have turned his main job into his greatest joy. "I can paint for more than two hours (up to eight continuous), I do not count them; it's like I get lost in time and space."

"Money is seductive, but it does not necessarily respect your sentiments. I work because my soul asks that of me, it requires me to feed it, to satisfy it" he resolves.

His work is unmistakable. Identifying a Kaletski painting is easy thanks to his hallmark, the cardboards. "It was a lucky accident. I was not seeking to be original; I did not have money to buy canvases." Twenty years later he became famous

FOTOGRAFÍAS: CHRISTIANA RIFAAT; CORTESIÁ DE ANNA ZORINA GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY (RETRATO) / CORTESIÁ VEUVE CLICQUOT (OBRA)

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for including and converting “discarded materials” he collected into works of art. His selection criteria? If the box shouts, “Pick me up! Pick me up!” “It was never my intention to resort to global or prestige brands, although Tiffany's are so pretty that I could never resist them. And yes, those of Veuve Clicquot have always been my favorites.” The brand's characteristic yellow reminded him of imperial Russia. Kaletski confesses to being passionate about champagne, the elixir that accompanies him in his philosophy of “drink and paint”. When the collaboration with the house of Madame Clicquot knocked on his door, he felt an absolute bliss.

It is no secret that painting is the first and great love of this Sean Connery of the strokes, but his heart does not belong to the visual arts completely. His creative passion explores music composition as well as a sadomasochistic relationship with literature, an unavoidable “torture” because it is how he manages to express ideas that cannot be captured in his paintings. It may be a surprise to learn that he does not believe in pleasure as an engine to achieve plentitude in his work. “I don't do well, when I am content. If I am sad or disillusioned, I paint better”. – DAFNE RUIZ

