

RAFEL JOAN

Paintings 1983-2013

Exhibition dates: 03.04.2014 - 15.06.2014

Museum opening times:

From Tuesday to Saturday from 10 to 20 h.

Sunday from 10 to 15 h.

Monday closed

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i contemporani de **palma**



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Exhibition co-produced by:



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Rafel Joan (Palma, 1957) is one of the leading Mallorcan artists who emerged in the 1980s as part of a resurgence of figurative painting propitiated by Neo-expressionism, an international movement that challenged the dogmatic legacy of conceptual art. During that period, Rafel Joan's works were featured in some highly representative group shows, including "13 Neofigurative Painters in Mallorca" (Sa Llotja, 1985) and "Landscapes" (Balearic Islands Association of Architects in Palma and Palau Moja in Barcelona, 1985-1986). Previous to that, his first solo exhibition was held at the Galeria 4 Gats in Palma in 1983. Throughout those years, and beyond, Rafel Joan was close to fellow painters Miquel Barceló and Lluís Claramunt, and his larger circle of friends included musician Pere Pla and poets Arnau Pons and Andreu Vidal.

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From 1989 to 1997 Rafel Joan lived in Barcelona, also traveling to Morocco and New York during that time. While his urban experience had an important influence on his work at the start of that period, from the mid-nineties on, the Mallorcan landscape became his main subject. Since then, Rafel Joan has been living in Vilafranca de Bonany.

This is the first retrospective exhibition focused on this artist's work. It was curated by writer Enrique Juncosa, former director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, and produced by the Institut d'Estudis Baleàrics and Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma.

DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE

In the 1980s Rafel Joan preferred large formats. He thus painted recognizable images, although they were sometimes distorted, with gestural and emotional brushstrokes, unconventional chromatic harmonies and texture-rich surfaces. He chose everyday subjects, leaning towards classical topics such as self-portrait, landscape or work at the studio. Rafel Joan's work would already start to oscillate between contradictory psychological feelings, from rage to quiet contemplation and also from the objective view of reality to personalized internalization. Some of Rafel Joan's landscapes are studies in light and the way it makes us see things in constant change.

BARCELONA AND MOROCCO

In the summer of 1987 Rafel Joan would spend several weeks in Marrakech and Sidi Rahel, in Morocco, painting everyday life inside the medina and desert landscapes surrounding the city. Later, in 1989, he settled in Barcelona, where he drew inspiration from the ambiance and atmosphere in Plaça Reial, or the La Ribera and El Raval neighborhoods. He was interested in dark streets, old stores and bars full of marginal characters. His Barcelona is far from diurnal, bourgeois vanities, even approaching apocalyptic visions such as in *Mon jui* (1993-2011).

MALLORCA AGAIN

Back in Mallorca, Rafel Joan rediscovers landscape. In an old quarry near Felanitx he paints some nocturnal scenes, extremely poetic and approaching symbolic. However, not all of his landscapes are contemplative; sometimes they feature burning trunks, hawthorns and desolated atmospheres. Rafel Joan's concentrated gaze, intent on registering all possible nuances of light and its plays on leaves and branches, reaches a point of showing us visionary, hallucinogenic aspects. Some of his paintings feature strange lights and floating particles, which are even little mysterious beings. Rafel Joan lives in Vilafranca de Bonany since 1998. During these last years he has widened his scope by flying in a light aircraft in order to be faced with a constantly changing horizon. He has also put on a diving suit to walk in the depths of the sea and then paint his memories of those walks. The results are almost abstract paintings, hypnotic images filled with detail.