

on issue no. XXXVI, from March 1959, which was dedicated to the “Poetic Conversations of Formentor”, and Millares created an original work for the issue, devoted to this outstanding literary event, and above all on issue no. XXXVII, published in April 1959, a monographic devoted to El Paso, two years after the group was created. As well as Cela’s acknowledgement it included some heartfelt words of affection dedicated to the group by Joan Miró and Vicente Escudero. Alongside the manifesto and chronology of the group and the biographies of its members, different works are reproduced both the front cover and on the inside, accompanied by texts by the artists themselves. In the case of Millares, a colour illustration and two texts are included, one of them referring to his definition of homunculus and the creation of the time.

The digital version of this issue of *Papeles de Son Armadans* can be consulted in the Gabinet room thanks to the Biblioteca Pública de Palma Can Sales (public library), along with the documentation selected for the exhibition, the fruit of our collaboration with the CAAM (Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno) in the Canary Islands.

## RESOURCES

Millares [exposició celebrada al Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, 1993]  
<http://mdc.ulpgc.es/cdm/singleitem/collection/MDC/id/137008/rec/1>

Manolo Millares, *Memorias de una excavación urbana y otros escritos*. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 1973 edición digital <http://mdc.ulpgc.es/cdm/ref/collection/MDC/id/44184>

Television programme (TVE) Tribuna de la cultura: Manolo Millares, 1979  
<http://www.rtve.es/alcarta/videos/programas-y-concursos-en-el-archivo-de-rtve/tribuna-cultura-manolo-millares-1979/1914670/>

Exhibition dates: 14.02.2014 - 11.05.2014

Museum opening times:

From Tuesday to Saturday from 10 to 20 h.

Sunday from 10 to 15 h.

Monday closed

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# Gabinet: Manolo Millares

The Gabinet space is focussing on the figure of Manolo Millares (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1926 – Madrid, 1972), with a selection of works from the museum’s permanent collection covering his period after the El Paso group. The hall presentation starts out from the basis of the display of two pictorial works and a series of engravings produced between 1961 and 1970, exhibited alongside documents on the artist and his work. It also includes his collaboration on the special issue of *Papeles de Son Armadans* on El Paso in 1959.

This exhibition aims to analyse Manolo Millares’ work from a new standpoint, recovering the violent dramatic quality of the pieces of sacking, the tearing and wringing of them, and his peculiar monochrome strokes from the gaze of the present, bringing us nearer to the moment in which they were conceived with the precaution of knowing that much remains to be analysed regarding this Canarian artist and the social and political environment he worked in.

The artist’s great-uncle, Agustín Millares Torres, wrote that “Las tinieblas jamás prevalecerán contra la luz y la luz nos viene del lado de la libertad” (Darkness will never prevail against the light, and the light comes to us from the side of freedom), greatly influenced by the vast majority of Millares’ work, and that of Antonio Saura, who based themselves on black as an element for representing anguish in the face of political repression and the dictatorship Spain lived under during this period. Like nearly all of his Informalist artist contemporaries, Millares adopted a stance against the dictatorship of the time through his work and, without forgetting his island roots, delved with his shapes into history and primitivism, investigating in the Museo Canario. This led him to create work that was extremely free, consisting of paintings that went beyond the bidimensional, trail and gesture.

## **Manolo Millares (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1926 – Madrid, 1972)**

Millares was born into a family of intellectuals who moved to Arrecife (Lanzarote) when the Spanish Civil War broke out. Self-taught, from a young age he began practising drawing, first within the realms of figuration and then turning towards other avant-grade proposals in the late 1940s, receiving the influence of Surrealism and Constructivism with Joan Miró and Joaquín Torres-García as essential models. His interest in primitive art and Guanche iconography materialized in the form of his well-known *Pictografías*, which he produced from 1951 to the mid-1950s.

With the aim of making intellectual life in the Canary Islands more dynamic – it had been affected by the Civil War and the Second World War – Millares published the magazine *Planas de Poesía* along with his brothers Agustín and José María, both of them poets, between 1948 and 1951, and founded the group Los Arqueros del Arte Contemporáneo (LADAC), a collective which came into being in 1950 and lasted until 1953, organising exhibitions, poetry recitals, etc. and whose members included Elvireta Escobio, whom he would marry in 1953.

In 1955 he moved to Madrid and two years later he founded the El Paso group with Antonio Saura. The members of El Paso were the writers José Ayllón and Manuel Conde and the artists Rafael Canogar, Luis Feito and Manuel Rivera, who were joined later by Manuel Viola and Martin Chirino, among others. This was the most important of the Informalist groups in Spain, remaining active until 1960. According to the definition in their manifesto, “‘El Paso’ is an activity that seeks to create a new state of mind within the Spanish artistic world”.

Over these years Manolo Millares defined his unique language using collages, for which he employed elements like wood, sand, fragments of ceramics or sackcloth, the latter being adopted from 1954 on for the creation of his “Muros” and “Perforaciones” series, and related to the burial techniques of the Guanche culture.

Sackcloth – a humble material – thus became the ideal medium for expressing his concerns: man, Spain’s recent past, the pain and the effects of war or the history of Spanish art, and specifically the Spanish Golden Age. He manipulates sacking, reinforcing its expressive quality, through shreds and knots; he superimposes

fragments of cloth or cardboard which are sewn into the surface, and finally applies the colour, an element he reduces mainly to black, white and red. All of this is embodied in his “Homúnculos”, which he started in 1960, and is also reflected in the two paintings from the Es Baluard collection, *Cuadro 160 II* (1961) and *Políptico* (1967).

The homunculus is the central theme of his work, man-like figures, a man who, for Millares, instead of evolving, is devastated, degraded, a tragic vision of the human species that he himself speaks of in the special issue of the magazine *Papeles de Son Armadans*. Between the end of the 1950s and throughout the ‘sixties, exhibitions in Spain and abroad (Paris, Venice, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, New York...) followed on from one another. The final years are characterised by the predominance of light expressed through white in his “Antropofauna” and “Neanderthalios” series, at the same time as he recovers drawing and calligraphy.

His work in the field of graphics came in the final period of his life: Millares produced fifty copies after his first lithograph (included in the folder “El Paso. Sei litografie di Canogar-Chirino-Millares-Rivera-Saura-Viola”<sup>1</sup>); among them is the folder “Torquemada”, present in the reserves of Es Baluard. The title refers to a poem by Manuel Padorno (Tenerife, 1933-Madrid, 2002), a poet, publisher and painter who was a close friend of Millares. The folder was published by the Galería Juana Mordó in Madrid in 1970; Millares resumed his conception of man with six silk screen prints that accompanied the reproduction of the poem, relating it to one of the key figures of 15th-century Spanish history - Tomás de Torquemada, Grand Inquisitor of Spain from the year 1483.

The different forms of collaboration maintained with writers and artists included one which linked him directly to Mallorca. This was the monthly cultural magazine *Papeles de Son Armadans*, founded and run by Camilo José Cela and published in Palma de Mallorca from 1956 to 1979. Millares participated

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<sup>1</sup> Text by Alfonso de la Torre, exhibition “Manolo Millares. Obra gráfica”, Fundación Museo Salvador Victoria, Rubielos de Mora (Teruel) From 22 June to 31 October 2013. Exhibition held in the Galleria L’Attico, “El Paso”, Canogar, Chirino, Feito, Millares, Rivera, Saura, Viola”, Rome, 15-30 October, 1960.