

Miquel Barceló

Vida y Muerte

Sep 28, 2024 — Jan 19, 2025 | MKM Museum Küppersmühle for Modern Art, Duisburg, Germany

Museum Küppersmühle presents the first solo exhibition by Miquel Barceló in close collaboration with curator Kay Heymer.

Miquel Barceló (*1957 in Felanitx, Majorca) is an internationally recognized Spanish artist known for his expressive figurative works, ranging from large-scale paintings to ceramics and bronzes to countless sketchbooks and book illustrations that unfold an existential and rich panorama of life in all its diverse aspects. With a selection of c. 70 paintings, a group of ceramics, a cabinet of sketchbooks, maquettes for large projects, and objects from the artist's personal collection, the MKM provides fascinating insights into the pictorial universe of one of the great painters of our time.

His challenging work is characterized by radical confrontations of opposites – ranging from the every day to the monumental, from joie de vivre to morbidity. The point of departure for the concept of this exhibition is the humble genre of Still Life painting, one of the basic elements of the European painting tradition. The Spanish version of the Still Life is known as bodegón. It describes paintings of simple foods and kitchen utensils. The genre has long been a source of inspiration for Barceló's existential take on painting.

After studying art in Palma de Mallorca and Barcelona, he joined a group of conceptual artists in 1976 who were preoccupied with ecological subjects. During the 1980s, he enriched his paintings with organic materials such as earth, stone, and vegetable substances. Amongst others, he was inspired by Antoni Tàpies and Anselm Kiefer. His interest in the organic, specifically decay and transcendence, reflects a deep understanding of Spanish mysticism and Baroque art.

Barceló's work finds its great predecessors in the work of Tintoretto and Veronese, and, more recently, in the paintings of Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso. Barceló is a wanderer. His paintings tell of the everyday – of life and death, as well as of strange and distant worlds, of Africa, where he lives at times, of the Catalanian coast, of the Balearic islands where he was born and grew up, and of the underwater world of the sea which he regularly explores as a diver. The realism of his depictions reveals itself suddenly, behind a seemingly abstract and physical application of paint that evokes his thorough knowledge of the Abstract Expressionist paintings of Jackson Pollock or Mark Rothko. Barceló is a world artist whose work encompasses image creations from paleolithic cave art to the contemporary.

In addition to his painterly oeuvre, Barceló has worked on numerous public commissions: he created the chapel of St. Peter in the cathedral of Palma de Mallorca with large ceramic reliefs (2002-2007) and designed a cupola for the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilization Chamber at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland (2007-2008).

The exhibition in Duisburg is accompanied by a publication containing an essay by the laureate of the Georg Büchner Prize, Clemens J. Setz, with contributions by the artist, and the curator of the show, Kay Heymer. It is published by Wienand Verlag, Cologne, in a German/English bilingual edition.