ALMINE RECH

Miquel Barceló
Autofictions

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The book as aesthetic object and reading as a visual theme are seen throughout the art since the Middle Ages. As the attribute of human figures identifying them as saint, scholar, or reader, the book becomes an image of mental activity and knowledge, the possibility of an openness to the world and the desire to experience it. Miquel Barceló (*1957, Felanitx) has explored the plasticity of books from the very start of his career; along with plants and animals, they are central to his art. But the artist is doing more than simply looking to reference a particular literary source, he aims to represent the things that fuel books, what constitutes them, what connects them with life.

While the thick rectangular form of the book appeared as early as 1975 with his Cadaverinas, boxes in which Barceló placed organic matter, then closed them to observe its transformation through the boxes' transparent lids, it was only in 1980 that he began working the materiality of book-objects and studying their possible depictions in a series of drawings. His artistic output of this period heralded Barceló's experiments with pigments, varnishes, clays, and work tools, as well as the importance of the traces that the hand leaves in the work of art. From 1984 to today, the theme has grown and assumed new iterations. Books are now associated with the human face and the female sex, are arranged on library shelves lining the walls of an enclosed space like some microcosm, figure as the sole subject of portraits, are stuck to the hull of ships in seascapes, and swamp the table depicted in still lifes.

Barceló's experience grappling with knowledge feeds into his art. It is a work act carried out by the painter. Featuring a collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings, engravings, and notebooks dating from 1970 to 2020, the exhibition sheds light on the links Barceló has forged between his art practice and the practice of writing and reading.