

MIQUEL BARCELÓ

Jan 13 — Mar 25, 2022 | Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Japan

Miquel Barceló (1957 -) has been vigorously engaged in artistic activities mainly in Europe since the 1980s, and is counted as one of the artists in the vanguard of contemporary art as a whole. Before coming to Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, this exhibition was held in the National Museum of Art, Osaka, followed in turn by the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum and the Mie Prefectural Art Museum, and presents a full portrait of the corpus of Barceló's work for the first time in Japan.

Barceló was born on the Spanish island of Mallorca (Majorca). After making his international debut with a sensational showing at the exhibition documenta 7 (in Kassel, Germany) in 1982, he broadened his sites of artistic activity from his native Mallorca to Paris, Mali (Africa), the Himalayas, and other places around the world. At each such site, he continued to produce works while squarely confronting its history and climate.

Centered around painting, Barceló's production activities extend over a wide range spanning the genres of sculpture, ceramics, performance, and others. In recent years, they have also borne fruit in imposing architectural projects, as exemplified by the ceramic decoration of Saint Peter's Chapel in the Cathedral of Santa Maria of Palma in Mallorca and the huge ceiling artwork in the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva.

In Barceló's works, the sea and land, flora and fauna, history, and religion occupy a key position as themes. He begets images expressive of these themes through veritable struggles with diverse types of materials. Linked with the presence radiated by this materiality, the resulting images have a primitive wildness and seem to be imbued with a mythical, magical power. At the same time, they impress the viewer with the fertile insight and intelligence behind them.

Barceló's works probe and reveal the human existence from its involvement with nature, religion, history, and culture. While causing us to reflect on our origins, they never stop bespeaking a power heretofore unknown in painting.

This is the first solo exhibition in Japanese museums of this important artist, whose art has long been almost absent from shows in Japan so far. With a focus on paintings on a huge scale, it brings together about 90 works including sculptures, ceramics, and videos of performances, beginning with his early activities and extending right up to the present.