

# MANOLO VALDÉS

## the poetics of interpretation

June 16th to September 30th 2018



The Municipality of Pietrasanta (LU), in collaboration with the Contini Art Gallery in Venice along with the Versiliana Foundation and Start, is pleased to present a one-man exhibition of the Spanish artist, Manolo Valdés, curated by Kosme de Barañano.

In the charming backdrop of Pietrasanta, famous for its marble workmanship and for its identity as an historical crossroad of artists and sculptors, several works of this contemporary artist will be on display.

Manolo Valdés' artwork presents itself as a refined study on innovation, yet at the same time, strongly entrenched in tradition: drawing from historical artistic patrimony and from pictorial and imaginative culture from the past, the artist reinterprets celebrated icons from which transpire an innovative vision founded on his passion for linguistic experimentation; in this sense, a translation (interpretation) of the poetics of plastic art has been achieved.

Velasquez, Rembrandt and Matisse are amongst the maestros upon which Valdés' attention is concentrated: "classic" subjects become a starting point for his creation which is skillfully re-elaborated in order to obtain a recognizable and contemporary expressive style.

The artist selects a subject, for example, *Las Meninas* by Velasquez. He re-elaborates it, develops it and re-proposes diverse formats, matter and technique. Through this creative process, we then see the image in a completely different and innovative form; a demonstration of the artist's own will-power to create a bond that is indissoluble, yet in continuous evolution between the past, present and future of art.

He takes possession of some of the most legendary art masterpieces which he then associates with a contemporary realization: the visual, vivid and vital expression, the study of the matter, the personal pictorial realism, the use of multi-dimensional stratifications and works in monumental size are only a few of the distinct traits of Valdés that render his style immediately notable.

Valdés is an artist capable of evincing vitality in art. In his paintings and sculpture in fact, one perceives how his passion for art drives him to search for new means of expression assessing unusual materials, dense and bituminous colors, luminous details and raw substances that transform his canvases into multi-dimensional, materic and dynamic objects; or the skilled workmanship of wood, of precious alabaster and the fusion of resin and bronze, to create splendid and singular sculptures.

In the variegated artistic production of the Spanish artist, also included are the works of large and monumental dimensions, that will be protagonists of the next exhibition in the city of Pietrasanta.

The Contini Art Gallery recently hosted a one-man show by Manolo Valdés, *I dettagli luminosi (Luminous Details)*, a presentation of nearly 40 of his most recent works that explore the creative universe of this remarkable Maestro. Following this successful event, it is with renewed enthusiasm that the Contini Art Gallery will present a rich and unique collection to the public that will intertwine with the evocative setting of Pietrasanta.

From June 16, the Piazza del Duomo and the ecclesiastic complex of Saint Augustine will be enlivened by the forms and colors of the works by the Maestro and will offer a stimulating panorama on the diverse methods, techniques and the multi-form experimentations of one of the most important exponents of the international contemporary art scene.

The sculptures will be placed in the heart of the historical center creating a dialogue between the work and the surrounding environment: for example, the splendid and colossal *Clio Dorada* will be installed, a magnificent sculpture created from brass and gilded steel. An enormous head with feminine features holding an elaborate headpiece of twisted, lucent branches. And, the fantastic *Mariposas*, from which shiny aluminum butterflies take flight seeming to flutter about in the encircling space.

The Saint Augustine churchyard will welcome the bronzes, *Caballero* and *Dama*, two equestrian sculptures that engage the spectator, inserting him into an imaginary fairytale.

The celebrated sculpture *Infanta Margarita* (inspired by Velazquez), is full of new-found energy and significance, though it conserves a regality and elegance typical of icons found in Spanish artwork.

Massive bronze sculptures will be installed the evocative external spaces; in the characteristic church of Saint Augustine, one will be able to admire the magnificent wooden works: *Blue Head* and *Blue Pamela*, both with stylized women's faces characterized by a glossy blue varnish; *Lillie*,

constructed in natural wood, takes the form of a gigantic head of a woman wearing a hat; the precise and delicate technique used to manipulate the matter, giving it an appearance of being light and airy, can be fully appreciated.

The artistic experimentation of Manolo Valdés which can be admired during this unique exhibition is evidenced in the paintings, *Dorothy sobre fondo gris* and *Retrato en amarillo y azul*, with their feminine faces made of stratified layers; the rough canvases take on a three-dimensionality and more materic aspect.

With this exhibition, our focus is to create a dialogue between the collective space and the captivating works by the Spanish artist, who through his works proposes a visual message filled with the echoes of an harmonious classicism, yet detached from the prototypes of the past; it captures the attention of the viewer in such a way that we can acknowledge Valdés as one of the most important Spanish artists living today.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

*Manolo Valdes was born in Valencia, Spain in 1942. At the young age of 15, he was already an apprentice as a painter while enrolled at the San Carlos Academy of Fine Arts in Valencia. In 1962 he participated in the National Exhibition of Fine Arts presenting his work, "Barca" (now in the permanent collection of the Queen Sofia National Museum of Art), which then contained elements that will later prove to be constant in his style of painting: the use of figurative art and the informal use of matter. Valdés taps on the resources of the historic Spanish patrimony, particularly from Velázquez and Picasso, and from the informal art of his immediate predecessors.*

*During his years of study and while traveling in Paris, he discovered the visual and artistic freedom of Pierre Soulages and Robert Rauschenberg.*

*He embarked on his career and one of his first assertions led him in 1964 to co-found a collective artistic group - the "Equipo Crónica" - ground-breakers of Spanish Pop Art. This allowed him to combine American Pop Art and figurative aesthetics into his works during the 1960s movement, "Nueva Figuración", and to cast a critical eye towards Spanish politics and art history. Following this experience which lasted until 1981, he began to exhibit his works in one-man shows.*

*He mainly dwells on a reinterpretation of artistic themes and stories lacking in provocative cross-references, devising his own creative universe through his artistic flair combined with an accurate study of the materials.*

*Prizewinner of many awards, amongst which the Spanish National Award of Fine Arts in 1985, his creations have been the subject of numerous national and international exhibitions. In 1986 he was invited to participate in the International Biennial Festival of Plastic Arts in Baghdad where he was awarded the Golden Medallion and since 1992, the artist has concentrated on sculpture and subsequently, opened a larger studio in New York.*

*In 2003 he held an important retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, curated by Kosme de Barañano; in 2006 at the Queen Sofia National Museum where all of his works from the last 25 years were collected. Worth mentioning are also the exhibitions at the National Art Museum in Beijing, China, at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, as well as his monumental sculptures displayed on Broadway, at the Botanical Gardens in New York and Place Vendôme (Paris). In 2007, the title of Officer of the National Order of Merit was conferred upon him by the President of the French Republic.*

*The works of Manolo Valdés can be found in numerous public and private collections such as: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the George Pompidou Center National Museum of Modern Art (Paris), the Queen Sofia National Museum Center for the Arts (Madrid, Spain), The Guggenheim Foundation (Bilbao, Spain), the Valenciano Institute of Modern Art and the Julio Gonzalez Center (Valencia, Spain), the Kunsthalle (Kiel, Germany), Kunstmuseum (Berlin, Germany), the Veranneman Foundaton (Krisuhoutem, Belgium), The National Art Museum of China (Beijing, China), Les Terrasses du Casino (Monte Carlo) and in many other locations.*

*Since 2016, Valdés has collaborated with the Contini Art Gallery, which represents him exclusively in Italy.*

## **A Selection of One-man Exhibitions**

2017

*Manolo Valdés - Luminous Details*, Contini Art Gallery, Venice, Italy

2016

*Manolo Valdés: Monumental Sculptures at Place Vendôme*, Place Vendôme, Paris, France

*Manolo Valdés: Recent Works - Paintings and Sculptures*, Marlborough Fine Art, London, England

2015

*Timeless Beauty: Manolo Valdés and Simon Procter*, Rosenbaum Contemporary, Boca Raton, U.S.A.

2014

*Manolo Valdés: Obra gráfica*, Marlborough Gallery, Madrid, Spain

2013

*Manolo Valdés: Sculpture and Works on Paper*, Marlborough Gallery, New York, U.S.A.

*Manolo Valdes: Paintings and Sculptures*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

## **Principal Works in Public Spaces:**

*Sculpted Group, The Family of Carlos IV*, Polytechnic School in Wilhmshaven (Germany)

*Infanta Margarita*, Municipality of Alcobendas,, Madrid, Spain

*Queen Mariana*, Polytecnic University of Valencia, Spain

*Queen Mariana*, Municipality of Ceutí, Murcia, Spain

*Horta de Ebro*, Municipality of Ceutí, Murcia, Spain

*Lidia's Head*, Biarritz, France

*The Lady of Manzanares*, Lineal Park of Manzanares, Madrid, Spain

*The Lady of Elche*, Miquel Hernández University of Elche, Spain

*The Lady of Murcia*, Murcia, Spagna

*The Women of Barajas*, Barajas Airpor, Madrid, Spain

*The Exorcist*, Bilbao, Spain

*Queen Mariana*, The Casino Terrace, Monaco

*Queen Mariana*, Via San Vincente, Valencia, Spain

*Ariadna III*, Sammlung Becker, Baierbrunn, Germany

*The Asturcons*, Oviedo, Spain

*The Iberian Lady*, Valencia, Spain

*The Meninas*, Düsseldorf, Germany

*The Meninas*, Bilbao, Spain

*Lady*, Molina de Segura, Spain

*Infanta Margarita*, National Museum of Peking, Beijing, China

*Regina*, Nassau County Museum, New York

**Inauguration Saturday June 16th, 6:30 pm - the artist will attend the opening**

**The exhibition will remain open through September 30th 2018**

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