

PRESS RELEASE

SANTIAGO MONTES. *Rara avis*

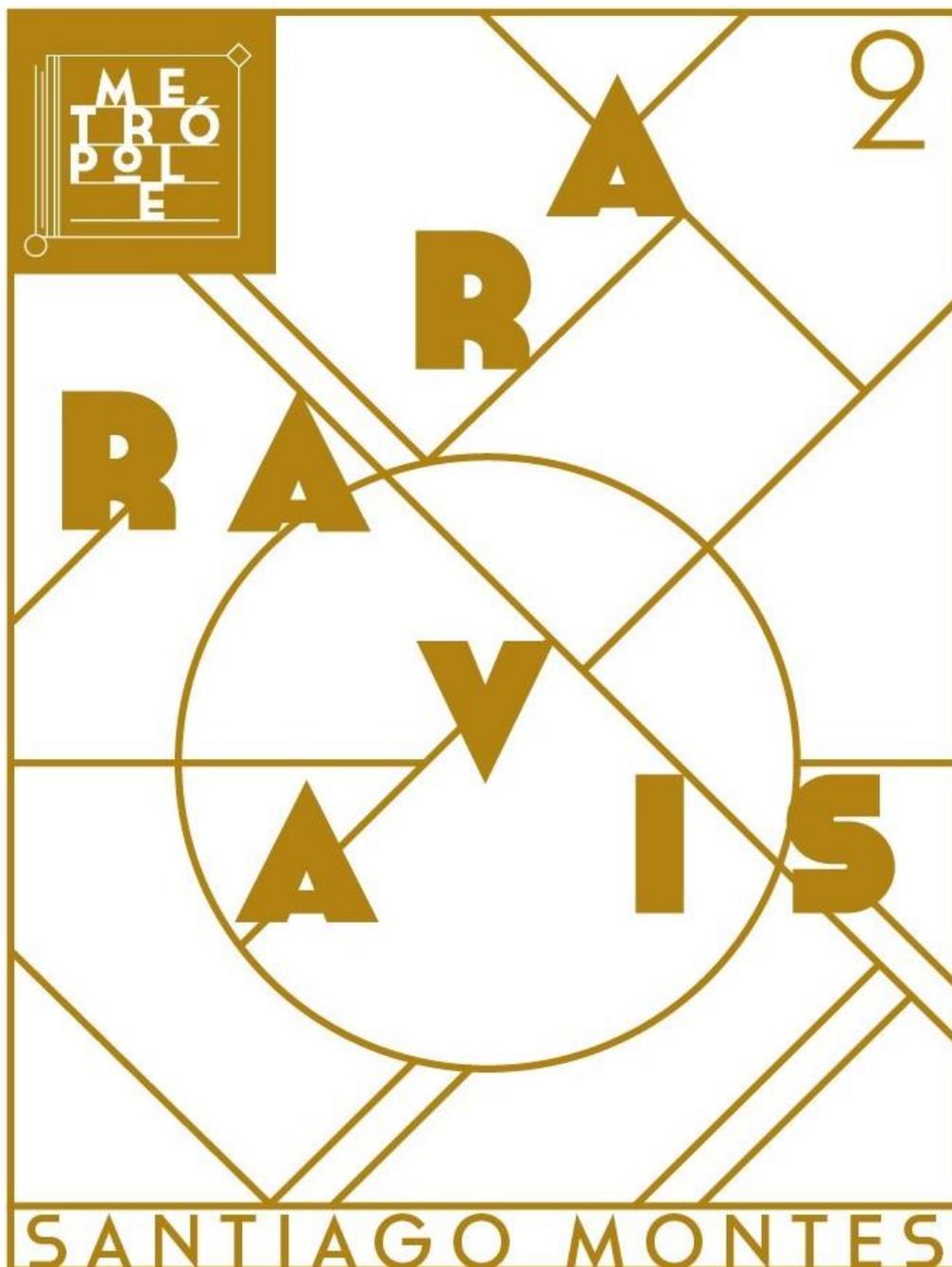
[METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galician Art]

26 October 2018 – 3 February 2019
MARCO, exhibition rooms on the first floor

Hours: Tuesday to Saturday (including bank holidays) from 11am to 2:30pm and from 5pm to 9pm /
Sunday, from 11am to 2:30pm

Produced by: MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Curated by: Rubén Martínez Alonso



INTRODUCTION

METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galician Art

The 'METROPOLIS. An urban perspective of Galician art' series, which has been commissioned by Rubén Martínez Alonso, was created for a dual purpose: to travel back in time, to the Vigo of the twenties, to the point in history when *Metropolis*, the film directed by Fritz Lang, was released in the city; while also offering an insight into the current Galician artistic panorama. The project is comprised of a series of individual exhibitions, all of which provide a vision of the present, and there is a common element in each of the displays which recalls the past.

This project has been envisioned in two clearly distinct areas, both in terms of the staging and of the content itself. The first floor of this exhibition space plays host, on the one hand, to pieces from the past. By means of a tribute to the film *Metropolis*, in which we have brought together a substantial collection of avant-garde architectural images and drawings, photographs and documents from the era, as well as art-deco style furniture, objects, clothing and decorative items, we have managed to recreate the atmosphere of the city of Vigo in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this second series of exhibitions, the general part focuses predominantly on Galician historical photography, and in fact, all of the pieces have been acquired from private collections.

The works of Xosé Manuel Castro were on display in the front rooms of the first floor of the museum from July to August as our first individual exhibition, and it is now Santiago Montes' turn to take the centre stage.

SANTIAGO MONTES. *Rara avis*

Under the title *Rara avis*, Santiago Montes has brought together more than forty paintings from his own collection in addition to several pieces which he has created especially for this project; pieces which posed quite a challenge for the artist due to their large format. His exhibition space also includes informative audio-visual content.

In line with the objectives and characteristics which have been chosen for this particular series, he has also included four new pieces which have been specifically created for this area and space. Through this work which he has entitled, *-Abstracción (I-IV)-* (Abstraction (I-IV)), he hopes to be able to bring the audience closer to the creative process, searching for a certain contextualisation of his work, taking into consideration the characteristics, dimensions and lighting of this particular space, and the way in which it can be explored.

More INFO can be found at <http://www.marcovigo.com/en/actuais>

TEXT BY THE CURATOR

METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galician Art

“On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the first showing of the film, *Metropolis*, by Fritz Lang, in the former Odeón cinema, we take a look back at what was certainly a turning point in Vigo’s history, a moment in which the past, present and future came together in this perfect and elegant harmony, known as *art deco*. A style which somehow managed to seamlessly combine classic and ultramodern design.

Just as *art nouveau* was going out of style, the *Art deco* style (the abbreviation of *arts décoratifs*) was beginning to emerge, with one coinciding with the autumn and the other with the spring of 1910. However, it wasn’t until the “roaring twenties” that this artistic movement really reached its peak, and despite its French name, this art movement managed to conquer the whole world, and in fact, it was on the other side of the Atlantic, in the wealthy North American society that this style really managed to reach great heights.

A symbol of great evocative power, *art deco*, to this day, is still synonymous with luxury and splendour. This art movement managed to resist the dramatic stock market crash of 1929, the devastating Great Depression which followed, and the long and bloody Second World War, although the postmodernism of the last quarter of the twentieth century essentially stripped it of its elegant and sophisticated languor. This decorative style has been revamped on various occasions, none quite as hyperbolic as the *neo-deco* movement of the eighties. And this trend has continued to the present, where once again we are witnesses to the revival of a style which will never go out of fashion given that it draws inspiration from classic art forms.

GALICIAN HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The country as the setting

During the twenties and thirties, Galicia and its people were the subject of the greatest and most emblematic work by some of the main Galician and foreign historical photographers.

These pieces captured the essence of urban and rural Galicia, with their respective economic and social activities. Historical and artistic documents in equal measure, including surviving contemporary copies and prints taken directly from the primitive photo laboratory, all with the artists’ approval.

The majority of the pieces are reduced-size, high-quality artistic photographs which could be sent as postcards or kept as collectors’ items. There are also other larger-scale pieces, considered as authentic works of art, many of which were able to compete with traditional oil-paintings and water-colours for a place in some of the more well-off households.

These scenes offer a romantic vision of life in our country during the interwar period, although not always without a veiled social critique”.

Rubén Martínez Alonso
Exhibition curator

TEXT BY THE CURATOR

SANTIAGO MONTES. *Rara avis*

“In danger of extinction, coherence has played an essential part in Montes’ career path. Sacrifice, devotion, suffering, solitude, unawareness, abandonment, deprivation... were just a few of the difficult challenges and unpleasant consequences which he had to face after choosing this difficult path when he found himself at his own crossroads.

This is why congruence today is somewhat of a frightened *rara avis* flying over our hedonistic and wretched society. It seems that its anachronistic hermit spirit, much like that of the monks in the early years of Christianity, requires absolute silence, the most intense darkness, prior to the breaking forth of glory and the celestial music.

Cohesive energy

The equilibrium breaks away from the chromatic analysis of his paintings, like the harmony of a well-tuned orchestra, in which each instrument plays its own score, with the audience applauding this cohesive work, this symphonic performance.

Fragments orbiting within their gravitational fields, foundations which delimit an infinite space, as if by illusion. And at the same time, these paintings themselves are remnants which are subject to the designs of a wise and just demiurge – in fact, a god, the protector of art and literature, that same god who gave the city its first olive tree, and who enjoys a chryselephantine retreat, shut away in the cella of a sober and imposing Doric temple, with their profile outlined against a radiant sky up there in the heights of the acropolis.

The universe in expansion

Montes may well be more accustomed to the manageability of small-scale canvases and the efficiency of acrylics, yet through the art of introspection, his pieces become somewhat of a border crossing into a universe in expansion, revealing at the same time, these unbridled gestures which occur through meditation.

A reflection prior to this trance in which energy is multiplied and channelled through the paintbrush. This alternation of centripetal and centrifugal forces, seemingly in search of a cosmic equilibrium which goes beyond the bodies’ limits.

Musicality

An inveterate music lover, Montes’ abstractions can be read as if they were authentic chromatic scores. A pictorial harmony which conceals this melody; one which can only be heard if our mind is able to disregard all space-time references.

And perhaps it was this fear of letting go, of witnessing the demolition of all mental constructions, this terrifying perpetuity, that led a critic to glimpse, in the lower edge of his paintings, this blurred memory of the table, this spatial and compositional resource used for the figurative elements of his already classic still-life pieces.

Dual and bipolar

The duality over which Montes' most recent piece has been constructed generates a certain unsettling feeling for the audience, one which is not easy to escape from. The melancholic stillness which is so characteristic of his work, and which enveloped his hazy still life pieces, alongside his masterful command of aerial perspective which allows even the invisible elements to come to light, has essentially given way to an all-out war, a titanic battle which the artist must face with his own physical and spatial limitations.

A piece which is the setting and battlefield in this struggle for survival, the place where the spectator approaches exactly as a forensic scientist would, to collect the indisputable evidence that will instruct the definitive artistic judgment.

The duality of a dark piece which is tremendously transparent, complex and extremely evident. With each stroke, the edge of this knife which engenders and annihilates, shines through. The screams, the sobs, the cries, the wails and roars, this rattle of death looming over the clamour of battle. The murmurs before the silence. The calm before the storm. The devastated field. Empty. Music. Balance of Power. A game of chess against oneself. Checkmate. The enemy trapped in the back of his head. Checkmate. Murder with hints of suicide.

This duality devoured by an intense bipolarity. Twins becoming transformed into Siamese twins. Inside. Deep inside. Extraction and biopsy. Cannibalism. Destroy to create. Creative destruction. A phoenix. Ash from a cigarette. A piece of work that lives on in us. The proof of life. Only it will talk of us when we are dead. Life as this momentary opportunity to create transcendence.

The importance of colour

The colour in Montes' work will prove seminal. An extraordinary illustrator, the artist gradually abandons line-work in order to capture this compositional freedom in which colour is the protagonist. Unique and unrepeatable colours, dreamt up by the tireless mind of this painter and from the intimacy of this study where the privileged visitor is able to discover this revelation, the true dimension of this creator.

Because, under this apparent chaos and seemingly uncontrolled explosion, the meticulous and carefully worked out architectural study is concealed, with the sets of checks and balances, the distribution of strengths and pressures exercised by each individual colour. All great constructions aim to live on, to outlive their maker, to strive for immortality".

Rubén Martínez Alonso
Exhibition curator

GENERAL INFORMATION

About the curator

Rubén Martínez Alonso (Vigo, 1980) graduated with a degree in Art History from the University of Santiago de Compostela, before going on to complete his doctorate in Language, Science and Anthropology at the University of Coruña. His doctoral thesis was entitled: *As sociedades recreativas na Galicia urbana (1850-1936)*, and whilst researching his thesis he also taught in the Faculty of Geography and History of Santiago de Compostela. He currently works as a geography and history teacher at IES Fin do Camiño de Fisterra. He firstly entered the literary world through the field of poetry, largely through his collaboration with the magazine: *DORNA. Expresión Poética Galega* which published his works throughout the first decade of this century. His first novel *1980 (ano cero)* was released in 2011 and it was followed by *A saudade do caracol* in 2012. He won the fourteenth edition of the Risco Prize for Literary Creation with *As escaleiras do Gran Hotel* in 2013. Several of his research papers have been published, *Imaginería lígnea de la iglesia parroquial de Ntra. Sra. del Carmen de Ferrol* and *El Casino de Vigo. Crónica ilustrada de la histórica sociedad de recreo (1847-1936)*, were published in 2006 and 2013, respectively. Within the art world, he has collaborated in various different art exhibitions, including: *Paisaxes* (Casa de Galicia, Madrid, 2009); *Paisagens da Galiza* (Casa da Cultura - Casa Barbot, Vila Nova de Gaia, Porto, 2010); *El bosque de favilas* (Afundación, Vigo, 2011); *Post industrial* (Marcos Valcárcel Cultural Centre, Ourense, 2012); *Naturezas* (Maritime Authority of Pontevedra, 2012); *Mostrarte* (Mayor's office, Vigo City Council, 2012); *Xosé Luis Otero* (European Parliament, Brussels, 2013); *Efímero. The intensity of the ephemeral* (AXA, Porto, 2014); *Atmosferas* (Vicente Risco Foundation, Allariz, Ourense, 2015), amongst others.

About the artist

Santiago Montes (Vigo, 1940), a graduate in teaching who also studied industrial engineering, could almost be considered as a self-taught artist, having learnt from the great masters in the museums of Madrid and Barcelona, alongside those of other European cities. He entered into the Galician art scene through his depictions of different styles: landscapes, still lifes, nudes and portraits. The cities take the centre stage in his magnificent soft pencil drawings in which he has portrayed Nuremberg, Rothenburg, Santiago de Compostela, and of course Vigo, and in fact his illustrations of the latter are compiled in the book, *Vigo. Calles y rincones*. He has participated in numerous individual and collective exhibitions which has allowed him to combine his artistic practice with his educational vocation. He is not so keen on abandoning his studio meaning that his exhibitions are always quite distanced, subsequently become historical, an example of this is the exhibition which took place in Madrid, in 1991. Santiago Montes' works can be found in the collections of prestigious Galician and Spanish museums, as well as in other important public institutions.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EXHIBITION

'Galician Historical Photography. The country as the setting'

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, MARCO'S Library-Documentation Centre will play host to a bibliographical exhibition which contains a selection of historical photography publications in which Galicia takes the centre stage. It will also be possible to look up the catalogues from other exhibitions which have previously been held in the MARCO, in which, while on a more general basis, historical photography remains the fundamental axis.

INFORMATION AND GUIDED TOURS

Our museum staff is available to help the visitors regarding any question or information about the exhibition, as well as during regular guided tours:

Every day at 6pm

Personalized visits for groups available, for bookings please call: +34 986 113900/11

Communication/Press Office Contacts

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