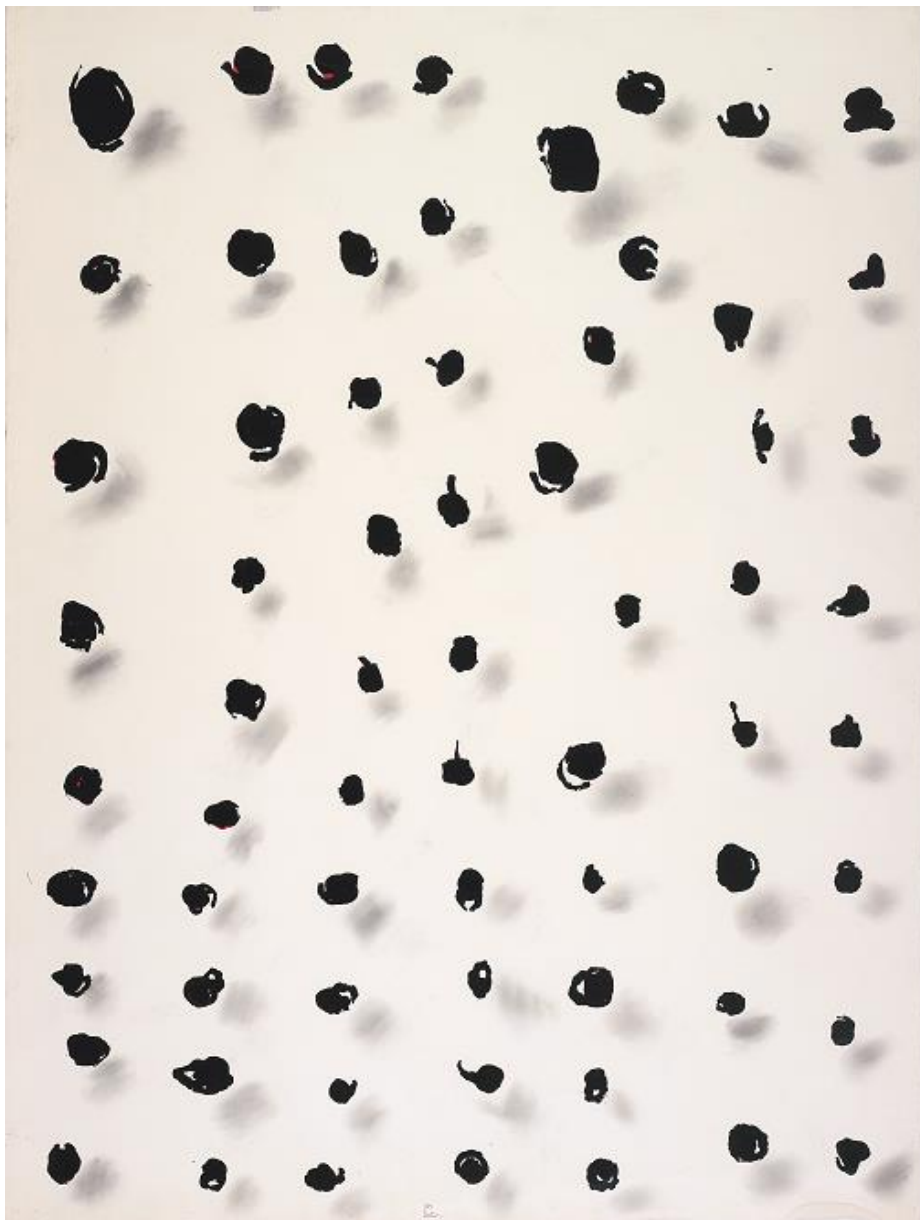


PRESS RELEASE

JORGE MARTINS. *Shadows and Paradoxes*



Jorge Martins. *Coleção*, 2002.
Acrylic and graphite on paper, 160
x 120 cm

27 September 2019 – 12 January 2020

MARCO, 1st floor front exhibition halls

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday (inc. 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

With the collaboration of: Fundação Carmona e Costa / MEIAC Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo de Badajoz / CAMÕES Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua de Portugal

Curated by: Óscar Alonso Molina

OVERVIEW

Beginning September 27, the MARCO resumes an exhibition program which showcases two solo exhibitions — Jorge Martins and Eduardo Gruber — in the first floor exhibition halls. Both proposals have work on paper as their leitmotif, notwithstanding they are quite different in aesthetics and works: Gruber's story along with Martin's poetic voice.

The exhibition **JORGE MARTINS. *Shadows and Paradoxes*** is the largest individual exhibition in Spain which is dedicated exclusively to the works of Jorge Martins, one of the most referential names in Portuguese art from this last century. At the age of seventy-nine, Jorge Martins, born in Lisbon in 1940, continues to produce pieces of work, and he has become somewhat of an intergenerational reference point, deeply respected, yet unswayed by the vagaries of fashion. A renowned artist, his art has stood the test of time thanks to his tireless research into drawing which he has carried out ever since his first exhibitions. At the end of the nineteen-seventies, a series of his drawings were displayed in an individual exhibition at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. This new proposal for MARCO includes carefully selected drawings alongside his sketchbooks, which are shown here for the first time.

According to the curator, Óscar Antonio Molina, "the exhibition focuses on this part of his abundant production, where the enormous richness of registers takes precedence: from geometry to the expressive gesture; from mathematical order to the verbal statements produced in writing, letters or annotations; from the shape to the blemish; from the figuration to the monochrome... For this exhibition in the MARCO, we have opted to display a wide range of the works that he produced on paper and in workbooks. We have selected pieces encompassing his entire productive career, therefore avoiding the conventional idea of retrospective, and rejecting the chronological display presentation, or anything that could lead to the creation of a false impression of lineal development over the course of his long career.

This exhibition offers the possibility to weave the different axes used to interpret his drawings, completing and updating the abundant critical fortune that the artist has received over the course of his professional career. In this way, we are able to analyse the drawing as a seismograph of states of mind, from the creator's emotional and "vital" pulse, therefore enabling us to see how a large proportion of his work is combined with analytical exactitude, and likewise determining the prominent manner in which the elements which make up the image are organized. Likewise, the performative aspects which arise from the creation of the large pieces which are common in this artist who, in order to excel in these pieces, often uses all of his body, just like a dancer would, will also be represented in this display. The selection also highlights the disciplinary limits of Martins' drawing, in terms of painting, narrative, architecture, stage design and/or the new current fields. In this sense, it is worth pointing out that the relationships that connected part of his graphic world were established in other decisive moments in the history of art, during late modernity (abstract expressionism and informalism, post-painterly abstraction, Field Colour Painting, *Supports- Surfaces...*). In this playful, paradoxical and almost perverse review of the late-modernist canonical tradition, another of Jorge Martins' abilities which we are looking to highlight in our exhibition is depicted. Finally, the ability of his graphic work to translate the intangible –that which is not immaterial-, such as light, time, language or space, will occupy the last section in this analysis. Our intention through this is to emphasise one of the most noteworthy characteristics of Martins' work; his astonishing capacity to bring to the fore, within the paper's limits, the symbolic, spiritual and metaphysical dimensions which are practically unmanageable outside of the image plane. The title of this

display, which was proposed by the artist himself, seemingly indicates this somewhat unfathomable dimension of art from its nuclear stage: drawing.”

Regarding the exhibition at MARCO, two strands need to be highlighted. It is the first time Martins includes his **sketchbooks** —in which the artist writes his thoughts, sketches and ideas for drawings and paintings— and, on the other hand, the MARCO begins a new collection of **artists books** which in the case of Martins, the publication brings his precise and poetic literary work together for the first time.

Both the exhibition and the publication are possible thanks to the support of the Fundação Carmona e Costa, the Camões Institute, and the MEIAC of Badajoz. These institutions will bring new collaborations to program the work of artists from Portugal and Galicia in different venues around the Iberian Peninsula.

+ INFO at <http://www.marcovigo.com/es/actuais>

About the curator

Óscar Alonso Molina (Madrid, 1971). PhD Arts. Art critic and independent exhibitions curator. As an essayist and lecturer, his work focuses on the latest artistic manifestations, paying special attention to visual rhetoric and the development of textual and narrative strategies. He has curated the *Solo Projects* at Lisbon (2009), Santander (2010) and Swab (2014) Art Fairs; and exhibitions projects such as *Artífice* (Seville and Cádiz, 2006; Córdoba, 2007; Madrid, 2008), *Emblema: Arte, Vida y Símbolo* (Madrid, 2009), *Souvenir de la vida* (Seville, 2013), *Matriz y Múltiple* (2015), *Memorias Imaginadas* (2017), or *Inasible* (2018). From 2011 he directs the program “Conexiones” at Museo ABC, a cycle of exhibitions around contemporary drawing.

A WORD BY THE CURATOR

JORGE MARTINS. *Shadows and Paradoxes* is the first major exhibition dedicated to one of the foremost names in 20th-century of Portuguese art to be held in Spain. Still working intensely at the age of seventy-eight, Jorge Martins (Lisbon, 1940) has become a reference within the rich present-day Portugal creative scene, as much for the firmness and independ of his aesthetic pursuit —largely aloof from the to-and-fro of international fashion art that, decade after decade, dictates the collective drift of creation— as for his unique position on the generational map. In fact, the attention his work has lately been garnering among young artists is an important element to be considered now that the time has come to evaluate the pertinence of a body of work such as his, in which impeccable formalisation combines with a continuous search for new approaches and solutions while delineating his visual images.

A leading contribution towards both the vitality of the work and the prestige of the artist was certainly the indefatigable exploration of drawing Martins has been carrying out since his first exhibitions, precisely sixty years ago; in fact, it was his drawings that brought him, already in the late 1970s, to the Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris, where a solo exhibition of his work was held. Drawing, that once 'secondary', if not subordinate, art form, currently enjoys a happy moment of renewed interest in all its aspects, be they conceptual, processual or formal; and Martins is one of its foremost practitioners, not only in terms of the appraisal of its historic successes and limitations during the second half of the 1900s, but also of the horizon line that surrounds it in our aesthetic present.

Our exhibition focuses precisely on drawing, that part of his abundant production in which this artist so excels. Large, dazzlingly versatile drawings where the predominant note is the abundance of registers: from geometry to the expressive gesture; from mathematical order to verbal enunciation in the form of writing, letters or annotations; from the silhouette to the patch, from the figure to the monochrome... Martins does not limit himself to a formula that can be multiplied into infinity by means of variations: unlike what is usual in creators around his age, who exhaustively explore an already conquered territory, our protagonist constantly avoids the repetition of a recognisable repertoire of gestures, marks, formulas or iconographies previously defined by himself as placed under the aegis of the signature.

For the exhibition at MARCO, we are presenting a broad selection of works, representing every productive phase of the artist. From the beginning, we have avoided the concept of retrospective (our exhibition is meant to highlight the remarkable moment Martins is presently enjoying, with a fully open and active studio, where some of his finest work ever is being produced), thus obviating the museum-mausoleum quality that tends to cling to such events. That same reason has led us to refuse the chronological ordering of the exhibits, as well as anything that might have caused the impression of a false linear development across Martins' vast trajectory, where past successes may appear to lead, in a sequential and somewhat unavoidable way, to others, derived and causal, that incorporate them. Things are almost never like that, and in our case that would certainly amount to prevarication. On the contrary, our selection criterion, the exhibition plan and the internal organisation of the book you hold in your hands all showcase how the artist's concerns renew themselves continually throughout the years and decades of his trajectory, growing in a spiral, so to speak, rather than in successive order. For that reason, we have organised the artist's trajectory in a series of thematic nuclei where his recent works cast oblique gazes in every direction —including the past— in order to generate unpredictable sequences and highlight reflections and illuminations that are transversal in time. Besides that, these are often previously unseen drawings, some of which were still being finished at the time of their selection, and which display the

stunning versatility of his syntax, the singularity, richness and refinement of his creative processes and the wide range of iconic elements he handles.

Our exhibition offers a number of new angles to approach Martins' work which enrich and update the abundant critical response to the artist throughout his career. Namely, we will look at drawing as the seismograph of the artist's moods, of his 'vital' and emotional pulse, showing how it is paired, in many of his works, with a remarkable analytic precision and an equally remarkable ability to organise the image's components on the plane of representation. A whole room in our exhibition will be dedicated to this balance of 'hot' and 'cold' moments. Similarly, the performative qualities resulting from the execution of certain works in the large formats that are typical of the artist, who while drawing must often use his whole body, like a dancer, will have a special place within the exhibition's layout. The paper's relationship with the drawing materials, on the one hand, and with the human scale, on the other, plays a decisive role in the physical creation of the pieces. Thus, the dominion of the wrist and the control of the wrist-elbow-shoulder-hip axes are sometimes associated to features of corporeal gestuality, of the body's dislocation (as a whole or just in part) over the paper's surface, like a dance or a gesture, until the desired linear rhythm is achieved. Another part of the exhibition will highlight the limits of the drawing when compared to painting, narrative, architecture, scenography and/or their present expanded fields. In this respect, there is a need to focus on the relationships some of these drawings have developed with other decisive moments in late modern art, such as the French *Supports-Surfaces*, as well as concrete features of Post-pictorial Abstraction, Field Colour Painting and the great achievements of Abstract Expressionism, though subverting in every case many of the canonic premises of their respective poetics, 'translating' them into the graphic codes of drawing. This playful, paradoxical and almost perverse re-reading of canonic late modern tradition is another amazing achievement of Jorge Martins to be suitably highlighted in our exhibition. Finally, his drawing's ability to express such intangible—but not immaterial—elements as light, time, language or space will also come under our scrutiny. Our intention is thus to present as one of the most remarkable features of Martins' work his admirable ability to stage within the limits of the paper leaf, a number of symbolic, spiritual and metaphysical dimensions that are basically uncontrollable outside the plane of the image. The exhibition's title, *Shadows and Paradoxes*, suggested by the artist himself, points out this somewhat unfathomable dimension of art at its core condition: the drawing.

Here we have, then, several intersecting series and sections, which should be looked at in an open, non-linear way, both chronologically and thematically. And all this, shall be finally completed with a selection of his sketchbooks, which will allow to come to light just a sample of the vast work accumulated over the decades in the more than one hundred cards that Martins has completed with annotations, reflections and drawings. These will be the protagonists of a specific publication prepared by the museum, where the reader can enter the dense and elegant intellectual world of our protagonist in which is the first time that an institution collects and studies such valuable materials.

Óscar Alonso Molina

Exhibition curator

A WORD BY THE ARTIST. Aphorisms

I draw to understand what it is to draw.

The very beginning of a line may already contain the whole drawing.

The line that speaks, the colour that sings.

I draw like one who writes aphorisms.

A pencil "attacks" a piece of paper like a bow attacks a violin.

Art was already conquering the distant before the great navigations did so.

To draw is to reconstruct the universe.

Without light there is no shadow, but is there light without shadow.

A piece is finished when it is more realistic/plausible than the reality.

*Some drawings are done with fingers, the hand, the wrist, the arm and the body.
Different scales and expressions.*

Drawing is closer to mathematics than it is to painting.

*Ah! The swiftness of the pencil!
I like to see the line emerging from the tip of the pencil!*

How can a line be autonomised but at the same time be obliged to "imitate" something.

Drawing, the possibility to finish unfinished.

In drawing, time becomes space.

*Drawing is a melodic line.
After this comes harmony and counterpoint.*

What interests me most when I draw is probably not what I am seeing or reproducing, but what lies beyond this.

Jorge Martins

GENERAL INFORMATION/ PARALLEL ACTITITIES

Bibliographical Exhibition / Documentation

Eduardo Gruber / Jorge Martins

27 October 2019 – 12 January 2020

Beginning after the opening of the exhibition, the Library-Documentation Center at MARCO presents a selection of **catalogues and publications** of Eduardo Gruber y Jorge Martins. The **documentary dossier**, which brings together links to articles, audios, videos, and other information about the artists, will be available here or on the website www.marcovigo.com at [Library/News](#) and [Exhibitions/Present](#).

Information & guided tours

The exhibition staff is available for any questions or information, as well as regular guided tours:

Daily at 6pm

'A la carte' group tours, please call +34 986 113904 / 113900 to book

Learning Activities

For groups of Pre-School, Primary, Secondary, High School and others.

With the support of: Obra Social "la Caixa"

From 15 October 2019

Place: exhibition halls and Laboratorio das Artes (1st floor)

Hours: Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 1:30pm / For booking please call +34 986 113900/113904

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