

PRESS RELEASE

XOSÉ LUÍS OTERO. *Atlas of solitude*

[‘METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galician Art’ IV]

14 June – 15 September, 2019

MARCO, exhibition rooms on the first floor

Produced by: MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Curated by: Rubén Martínez Alonso



INTRODUCTION

METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galician Art

The METROPOLIS cycle, curated by Rubén Martínez Alonso, reaches its fourth stage with the exhibition by artist Xosé Luís Otero. The cycle was conceived with a double objective: making a trip to the past, to Vigo in the Twenties, when Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* premiered in town; and, at the same time, offering a perspective of the current Galician art scene. The proposal consists of several individual exhibitions as a view of the present, together with a common section for all works as a look to the past.

The project comprises two clearly differentiated areas, both with regards to staging and to contents, laid out within the spaces of the first floor. The area corresponding to the past consists of a room where, as a reference or homage to the movie *Metropolis*, the spirit of Vigo during the 1920s is relived through vanguard architecture plans and images together with photographs and documents of that time, as well as art déco furniture, objects, clothing and decorations.

XOSÉ LUÍS OTERO. *Atlas of solitude*

Xosé Luis Otero's proposal for the fourth stage of the *METROPOLIS. An Urban Perspective of Galicia Art* series, encompasses two of the key disciplines that have been present throughout his training and subsequent artistic career: the pictorial and the sculptural. As such, in his installations, the landscape, this traditional genre from which he drew inspiration in his initial proto-abstract art, now takes on a new dimension, becoming the leitmotiv of a universe with two extremes: rural and urban.

In line with the objectives which have been chosen for the METRÓPOLIS series, Xosé Luís Otero's exhibition includes a selection of newly produced pieces, under the title *Atlas of solitude*. All of these pieces have been produced over the last few months and have been especially created for this area and space. He is searching for a certain contextualisation of the works as a whole, taking into consideration the rooms, dimensions and lighting of this particular space and the way in which it can be explored. Through his use of audio-visual material, he brings the audience closer to the creative process.

Seriation is a work method that allows Otero to explore all of the possibilities of one same idea and sublimate this approach which helps him to embellish and magnify a piece of work understood as a chosen whole. By doing so, the artist manages to virtuously build this landscape which is the backdrop to his own experiences in life.

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

TEXT BY THE CURATOR

Xosé Luís Otero. *Atlas of solitude*

Renovator of a landscape constructed from memories, fragments and dregs of an enormous emotional toll and expressive force; this devastated natural work, the deserted city as a reflection of the individual's solitude.

A redrawn, restructured, modified and denatured landscape, a process that manages to convert it into this same basic concept, into a mental construction. A lifeless landscape, unshaken by the passage of time, Otero has paradoxically erected a solid image of destruction, an authentic *Atlas of solitude*.

The Devouring Man

For Otero, antisocial and destructive behaviour is masculine. It is the Devouring Man, Mother Earth's ancestral predator, the savage rapist of the maternal uterus, the explosion of amniotic fluid, the unscathed and victorious atavistic legacy.

An act of uncontrollable manly strength that shares its origin with humanity and moves forward with it. A devastating colonization of the planet that makes a victim of this most widespread crime, leaving all of those who have committed it unpunished and tolerated.

So a life sentence or the death penalty. This does not matter. Well, what is the prisoner, the human being, if not an eternal being sentenced to death? A human imbalance which will inevitably reach its unrepentant conquest, which is none other than its own extinction.

The inherited landscape and the new landscape

One. We are the heirs of the venom that dyes the rivers that die before reaching the sea. The ashes that now threaten to overflow these vast caskets that used to be abundant woodland. Broken figures in the steamy landscape. Decay, disorder, chaos. A magnitude of abandoned structures.

Two. A threshold for transit, a gateway and a means of communication.

Three. The conquest of a three-dimensionality that strengthens its path, encouraging a journey of exploration, and rendering mere observation impossible.

And four. These are the new landscapes, constructed from their own destruction. Circumscribed curves in an infinite place, in absolute space. Interior landscapes that are a way of sublimating this painful contemplation, this aesthetic experience.

Sanctum sanctorum

An artist's studio is their most sacred place, their privately owned reserve, the place where all that has been gathered from outside sprouts, a cavern where artists bear witness to their own miracle.

High and narrow windows zealously watching over the eremite's enclosure, the eremite is buried in this cell where isolation erases any notion of space and time. And a melody that only he can hear. Attentive to the strong beating of his heart which is crying out to leave or to abandon this ridiculous thoracic cage once again. IT is out there, but yet it is more inside than ever, this Everything, this absolute Nothingness, this delicate sublimation and wild instinct, the maternal caress and the mundane impact.

Poetry, music and intimate reflection, the three sole companions on this journey to creative development, within its supreme process of investigation. A studio, a place to store material elements, objects and textures; but also, and in particular, a place to store the intangible, the ideas and concepts which come to the artist on a daily basis. Sources of inspiration. Instruments for this process that can give an initial project form and convert it into the final piece of work.

The *Aleph* or the illusion of time and space

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the sacred language, is the aleph or alef, which is the only letter pronounced by God in Sinai. The symbolic and evocative title of a tale, seventeen, which would later lend its name to the book published in 1949. Nonetheless, it would only be within Borges's universe that our reference would make sense. There, in the corner of the basement of an old house in Buenos Aires on Garay Street, Borges would discover "one of the points in space which contains all points", "the place where all places are seen from every angle, each standing clear, without any confusion or blending".

Because this is how Otero's refinement of his initial landscapes is defined, those enclosed places and moments, which did without a doubt exist, but which aspired to the absolute, to the idea, to the concept, to everything. According to Borges in his *Aleph*: "In that single, gigantic instant I saw millions of acts both delightful and awful; not one of them amazed me more than the fact that all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes beheld was simultaneous...".

From the countryside to the city

The rural exodus, the traumatic experience the artist suffered during childhood will impregnate his landscapes with a dramatism of a consubstantial nature. Two universes, two realities as close as they are far, equidistant from this individual condemned to isolation, to the inherent solitude of the sole.

A familiar atmosphere, well, this atmosphere that he managed to recreate in his studio, this place that is both neutral land and a battlefield, a space in which neonates and the terminally ill coexist.

Physical exile through metastasis, torn regret from what has been lost and is irretrievable. Despair. Exiled emotions that now feel this old chill once more. A mirage with nightmarish glints, now present inside an urban perimeter as well. The oxidized skeleton. The silent and grim uninhabited hive.

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 book of poems *Camiño de ningures* was released in 2017. His first novel *1980 (ano cero)* was published 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. His latest novel, *Vila Suárez*, recently published in 2019. 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

Xosé Luís Otero (Nocelo da Pena, Ourense, 1966) has been producing art since the beginning of the 1990s and he has exhibited his work in countless individual and collective exhibitions, as well as participating in important national and international art fairs. His creative development within the field of contemporary art is the result of an investigation process in which he experiments with new materials and textures, focussing always on a main concept or idea, source of inspiration or driving force. His works have been selected in prestigious competitions and biennials, he has received scholarships and prizes, and his pieces form part of some very relevant private and public collections.

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 / 986 113904

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