



Manolo Valdés, *Orchids III*, alabaster and aluminum, 2017, 76 x 197 x 45 cm © 2017 VG Bild-Kunst

MANOLO VALDÉS

Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art is looking forward to presenting a solo exhibition by the Spanish artist Manolo Valdés at this year's DC Open. From 8 to 10 September 2017, Düsseldorf and Cologne open their galleries to show work by artists from across the globe. The DC Open launched in 2009 as a united gallery weekend for the two cities.

The gallery's ties of work and of friendship with Manolo Valdés go back a long way. In the course of his career that spans more than fifty years (and counting), his body of work has been honoured with numerous exhibitions at renowned international institutions. Manolo Valdés began his career in 1964 in the artist collective *Equipo Crónica*, which consisted of himself and Rafael Solbes. This collaboration was cut short with the early death of Solbes in 1981. Since then, Valdés has continued to his art practice alone, establishing his own, unmistakable visual language in collage-like wall works in paper, sackcloth and paint, as well as in sculptures and graphic art. All of these works are characterized by ever-present direct references to art history and at the same time each of the motifs becomes his own through his treatment of the material and his sense for composition and effect.

Supporting his oeuvre – though not defining it as a whole – is a profound knowledge of the history of art and a contemplation of how art is disseminated, marketed and what follows from it. Yet, at the heart of his interest is the question of what will remain of art, what will outlast the centuries. His aim is to preserve the magic of art, the beauty found in the silhouette of a figure, in colour and ornament, the miracle that may arise from the stroke of a brush. In each of his works, Valdés searches anew for the possibility of an experience through the senses and seeks to enable an experience of art.

He has also had an increased presence with sculpture in the public space since the 1990s. In 2006, in the context of the Düsseldorf *Quadrennial*, Beck & Eggeling facilitated the acquisition of several sculptures from his series *Las Meninas* by the City of Düsseldorf. Following the generous gift by Manolo Valdés and the gallery, the complete group can today be viewed at the Hofgarten.

Beck & Eggeling International Fine Art

Bilker Str. 5 + 4–6, D-40213 Düsseldorf

Opening: 8 September 2017, 6 PM

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Manolo Valdés, *Perfil sobre fondo carmín*, collage, mixed media on canvas, 2016/17, 122 x 93 cm
 © 2017 VG Bild-Kunst



Düsseldorf Cologne Open Galleries

SPECIAL OPENING HOURS

Fri, 8.9.: 6–10 PM

Sat, 9.9.: 12 AM – 8 PM

Sun, 10.9.: 12 AM – 6 PM

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Manolo Valdés began his career with the artist collective *Equipo Crónica*, which he founded in 1964 with Rafael Solbes and Juan Antonio Toledo. While Toledo left the collective after only a few days, Valdés and Solbes worked together until Solbes's early death in 1981. Drawing on the formal parameters of Pop Art, which gave shape to their works, they dissected art history, deconstructed its icons and reconfigured details and even entire picture sections, putting them in new contexts. Given the layered nature of their art, the works could be interpreted as engendering art historical reflection and a critique of consumerism on the one hand, and a criticism of the conditions in Franco's Spain on the other. The duo's early popularity saved the artists from the regime's censorship and repression.

Since the death of Solbes in the early 1980s, Valdés has continued to practice his art alone. He has remained committed to the ideas of *Equipo Crónica* for the basic tenets of his art, but he has also established his own visual language that remains unmistakable today.

The early years were marked by a strictly conceptual approach: connecting to art history as a fund for image making, removing details from their original pictorial contexts, adopting a fixed repertoire of iconographic material, working in series which appeared never to end. This was a process that Valdés borrowed from Pop Art. It created a distance to the subject and a freedom from the original context that opened new interpretive leeway. But while Pop Art celebrates the surface as a space for projection and imagination, for Valdés the real work only begins here: In his large-format wall works he uses techniques similar to the collage, applying paper, rags and pieces of sackcloth, and creating texture with paint that often meets the picture plane as a thick impasto, lending these works a unique tactile presence that speaks to the senses.

In his sculptural works, which usually constitute a transfer of image details into the three-dimensional, he uses the entire palette of classical, sculptural materials – from bronze, aluminium, iron and steel to alabaster and wood – and achieves an almost seductive tactile quality and liveliness from the interaction of materials and forms, surface treatment and modelling, even with those works that take up a given space or even challenge its borders. Also included in the exhibition are his graphic works, whose surfaces, due to the conditions of the medium, are not “graspable” per se. Yet, he creates texture through the use of colour, hatching and by playing with collage-like compositions of motifs, ornaments and designs. Valdés thus achieves the trick of making motifs truly his own: He moves them beyond being only a quotation or paraphrase, an appropriation of somebody else's art, and turns them into completely original works. At the same time, he creates a level of experience through the senses that goes beyond mere viewing.

In the works of Manolo Valdés we can certainly recognize a criticism of art reception in a society dominated by media and consumerism and marked by a constant flood of images which are reproduced ad infinitum. His art essentially springs from a predicament, namely that we are familiar with the icons of art history – having seen them in catalogues, on postcards and through the various excesses of the art marketing industry – but have never actually experienced them and been able to relate to their magic. Supporting his oeuvre – though not defining it as a whole – is a profound knowledge of the history of art and a contemplation of how art is disseminated, marketed and what follows from it. Valdés is not interested in mere cultural criticism, in intellectual hair-splitting or academic guessing games. Whether viewers of his art are able to classify perfectly each of his motifs does not matter to him. At the heart of his interest is, rather, the question of what will remain of art, what will outlast the centuries. His aim is to preserve the magic of art, the beauty found in the silhouette of a figure, in colour and ornament, the miracle that may arise from the stroke of a brush. In each of his works, Valdés searches anew for the possibility of an experience through the senses and seeks to enable an experience of art.

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The artist lives and works in Madrid and New York City.