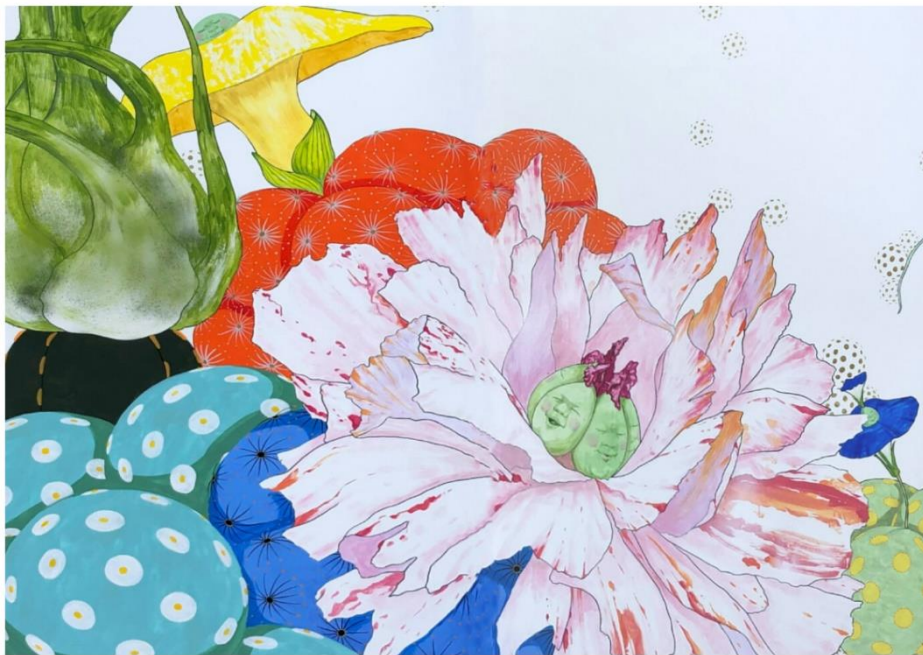


Después de la niebla, primeras flores

Oriente y los orientalismos,
del modernismo a la modernidad

Del 26.04.2023 al 07.01.2024



© Mari Ito

Comisaria: Menene Gras Balaguer

Alberto Baraya | Ana Nance | Antoni Muntadas | Azuma Makoto | Cecilia Paredes | Hang Sungpil | Javier Garcerá | Jean Marie del Moral | Joan Fontcuberta | Lee Lee Nam | Linarejos Moreno | Luo Min | Manuel V. Alonso | Mari Ito | Marina Núñez | Marisa Gonzalez | Nicolás Combarro & Wawi Navarroza | Nobuyoshi Araki | Pablo Merchante | Paula Anta | Takashi Murakami | Teresa Esteban | Yasumasa Morimura

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Casa Asia and Casa Vicens organise a contemporary art exhibition on floral themes in the Orient and Occident

- For the first time in Barcelona, the exhibition will bring together the work of 24 contemporary Spanish, Asian and Latin American artists, in their conversations with the orientalism of modernism through floral forms
- The floral theme is the link that unites the works of all those participating in the project with different techniques: drawing, painting, photography, video and installation
- The exhibition can be seen at Casa Vicens from April 26 to January 7, 2024

Barcelona, 25 ABRIL 2023

Casa Asia and Casa Vicens present the exhibition project After the fog, the first flowers. Orient and orientalism from modernism to modernity. This exhibition brings together the work of 24 contemporary Spanish, Latin American and Asian artists who offer their personal creations in an interpretation of floral representation.

The exhibition can be seen from April 26 to January 7, 2024, at Casa Vicens, Antoni Gaudí's first house where from its conception, the architect established a constant dialogue with the garden that surrounds the house, where a nature-themed ornamental model can be seen in all its rooms.

This is a unique exhibition that, for the first time in Barcelona, will bring together 24 contemporary artists who share a common link, the floral theme. Each one of them will form their own creative discourse through different formats and techniques, such as drawing, painting, photography, video and installation. This exhibition project relates the orientalism of modernism and the globalisation of art today.

Of the 24 artists participating in the exhibition, 11 are Spanish: Antoni Muntadas (installation), Javier Garcerá (painting), Pablo Marchante (painting), Teresa Esteban (painting), Joan Fontcuberta (photography), Nicolás Combarro (photography), Linarejos Moreno (photography), Paula Anta (photography), Manuel V. Alonso (drawing), Marina Nuñez (video), and Marisa González (video-installation). The North American Ana Nance (photography) and the Frenchman Jean Marie del Moral (photograph) have Spanish nationality.

Nine are Asian: the Japanese Mari Ito (pictorial installation), Takashi Murakami (painting), Yasumasa Morimura (photography), Nobuyoshi Araki (photography) and Azuma Makoto (video). The Koreans Han Sungpil (video) and Lee Lee Nam (video), the Chinese Luo Min (painting) and the Filipino Wawi Navarroza (photography). Two Latin American artists

complete the exhibition: the Colombian Alberto Baraya (installation) and the Peruvian Cecilia Paredes (photography).

The curator of the exhibition, Menene Gras Balaguer, defines the exhibition project as “a sharing of the representation of floral forms related to all the contemporary productions that have been grouped together, arousing particular interest in the validity of floral representation in contemporary art; and, on the other hand, from the perspective of the floral theme that these artists share, to suggest connections that can be developed between the works shown, the history that precedes them and the links that demonstrate their appeal as manifestations valued by artistic historiography and contemporary criticism”.

Floral art in Orient and Occident civilisations

Floral art has had a constant presence in the history of art. From paintings in ancient Greece to the present day, flowers and plants have been a source of inspiration for artists from all eras.

In Ancient Greece they were seen as an important part of daily life and religion, and during the Renaissance they were a symbol of beauty and natural perfection. In the 17th century, floral art became a popular genre in Europe, and it took on a primary role during the Baroque period in particular, which was also the case with floral painting from the Spanish Golden Age and Flemish painting from the Netherlands until the 18th century. During the 19th century, floral art underwent a revolution with the impressionist movement. The artists of this movement began to use flowers and plants as decorative elements in their landscapes. In Asia, the culture of nature, especially in China, Japan and Korea, and the presence of plant forms, flowers and plants, also dates back to antiquity, especially in ornamental painting and later in classical landscape painting in China and Japan. Today, floral art continues to evolve and adapt to cultural and social changes, and continues to be a source of inspiration and creativity for artists around the world.

“From the beginning, the exhibition has been thought of as a means to show the interest of floral art in the civilisations of the Orient and Occident, starting from the unlimited dialogue between the creations presented by contemporary artists. Their proposals offer a way to build bridges between East and West, and a means to avoid resorting to stereotypes that have contributed negatively to the construction of the East from a colonial perspective. The floral theme is not a pretext, but the centre of this project, in which the images produced by its authors converge, thinking about the worship of nature that literature has facilitated and absorbed historically since antiquity”, says the curator Menene Gras.



The title that gives the exhibition its name has been inspired by two verses taken from Matsuo Basho's haikus and the subtitle aims to "contextualise the works that are presented and the place where this happens. Precisely, Orient and orientalisms from modernism to modernity makes visible the idea that 'modernity always remains unfinished, whatever the historical stage from which it arises, identifying itself with each change of era'. At the same time, it makes clear how orientalism continues during Catalan modernism and European art nouveau in all artistic disciplines.

Those who come to see the exhibition at Casa Vicens will be able to enjoy a unique dialogue around the floral theme, within the framework of a building that has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, that of Casa Vicens, with works by important figures from the national and international art scene.

About Casa Asia

Casa Asia is a public consortium made up of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, the Generalitat Government of Catalonia, the Barcelona City Council and the Madrid City Council, with the aim of contributing to improved knowledge and promoting relations between the societies of Asia and the Pacific and Spain, in the institutional, economic, cultural, and educational fields, as well as bringing closer and facilitating the exchange of cultures and projects of common interest. The institution, created in 2001, over the years has become the main public diplomacy body in Spain in the Asia-Pacific region and a meeting point for all those figures interested in one of the most dynamic areas of the world. Casa Asia is headquartered in Barcelona and has a centre in Madrid.

About Casa Vicens

Casa Vicens is Antoni Gaudí's first house, built between 1883 and 1885. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2005, it is his manifest house, where a young Gaudí, barely thirty years old at the time, laid the foundations of what would be his later architecture. Located in the Gràcia neighbourhood of Barcelona, it opened its doors to the public in November 2017, after three years of restoration and rehabilitation that allowed the house to return to its origins. The outstanding rehabilitation carried out by Martínez Lapeña-Torres Arquitectos and DAW Office, has received various accolades and was a finalist in various architecture awards around the world (FAD Architecture Award Finalist 2018, Rehabilitation Prize at the Lledó Architecture Awards 2018, prize winner in the XIV Spanish Biennial of Architecture and Urban Planning 2016-2017, a candidate for the EU Mies Award 2019 and a finalist in the XI BIAU Awards 2019). Casa Vicens has the Biosphere certification for its commitment to sustainable tourism, the Safe Tourism Certified seal awarded by the Institute for Spanish Tourist Quality, and the Safe Travels seal supported by the World Travel and Tourism Council. These certifications recognise the full and correct application of the hygiene and health measures established to deal with COVID-19.

Alberto Baraya (Bogotá, Colombia, 1968).

Alberto Baraya is a multidisciplinary artist that works with various media. His practice essentially focuses on the creation of new geographical representations of our everyday behaviour. He studied in the Faculty of Arts at the National University of Colombia and completed his training in Spain, specialising in new media art at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and with a Master's Degree in Aesthetics and Art Theory at the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). The artist has taken part in international events such as the Berlin Biennial (2014), the Cuenca International Art Biennial (2011) and the São Paulo Biennial (2006), while also participating in numerous group projects at the Gabriel García Márquez Cultural Centre (Madrid, 2020), the Bronx Museum (New York, 2014) and the Jumex Foundation Collection (Mexico City, 2013).



Greenhouse of Artificial Plants (2014)

Installation. Polycarbonate construction (250 × 185 × 195 cm) and artificial plants.

Similar to a gardener and plant collector, the artist imitates the famous botanist José Celestino Mutis (1732-1808). However, while the latter discovered and inventoried plant species, Baraya parodies scientific exploration with artificial plants purchased in shops and markets, simulating an expedition in search of specimens that resemble authentic tropical flora.

Courtesy of the artist and the Fernando Pradilla Gallery

www.galeriafernandopradilla.com

Ana Nance (Carolina del Sur, EUA, 1969)

Ana Nance is a photographer who has primarily worked for the press. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) Degree from the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia in 1991, and before moving to Madrid she lived and worked in New York for over a decade. Nance has managed different teams working on advertising campaigns for major brands that include Coca-Cola, Nike, Mercedes, Visa, Renault, Movistar Series and Iberdrola. She has also collaborated with leading publications such as *El País Semanal*, *Marie Claire*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vogue*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The New York Times* and *National Geographic*. Her awards and accolades include the *British Journal of Photography's* Female in Focus award, the Prix de la Photographie, the American Photography Award, the ICP Award, the LensCulture Art Photography Award and the ARI Award for Editorial Photographer of the Year. She has taken part in fairs, galleries and festivals in Europe and the United States and her artistic production has featured in group and solo exhibitions. She is currently a consultant for the UNWTO and teaches at the IED Design School in Madrid.



Carnation Necklace in a Kathmandu Market (2010) / Lotus in a Bangkok Market (2011) / Orchids in a Temple in Seoul (2012) / A Mosuo's Dahlias, Luoshui, Yunnan Province, China (2014)

Photographs printed on cotton paper with natural inks and wooden frames (50 × 50 cm).

Nance's photographs seek to capture the language of plants and convey their sensory experience. Despite the geographical distance from the location where these flowers were photographed, there are many silent connections between them that evoke a certain closeness.

Courtesy of the artist

Antoni Muntadas (Barcelona, España, 1942)

Antoni Muntadas' artistic production explores political and social issues. In the academic field, he has taught and run courses and seminars in Europe as well as in North America and Asia. Among other places, at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the San Francisco Art Institute and the CAFA (Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing). He has also been an artist-in-residence and lecturer at several research and educational institutions, including Arteleku (San Sebastián), the Western Sydney University and the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), where he was also a researcher and visiting professor until 2014. He is currently a lecturer at the University Institute of Architecture in Venice. Muntadas was the artist commissioned to represent Spain in its Giardini Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennial, with his project *On Translation*. The 72nd Venice International Film Festival in 2015 invited Muntadas to show *Dérive Veneziane*, a 38-minute-long video focusing on the most hidden part of the city of Venice, in images recorded at night and aboard a boat. His projects have been exhibited in museums and art centres all over the world, winning numerous awards and grants from the Spanish Government and other institutions, from the Rockefeller Foundation to the Government of Catalonia with the National Award for Visual Arts.



Weeds (2021)

Ten earthenware dinner plates 28 cm in diameter on a 150 cm diameter table with tablecloth.

The *Weeds* tableware focuses on the importance of plants in processes such as travel, displacement and colonisation. Depicted on the plates in the form of botanical illustrations, Muntadas brings to mind the introduction of these aggressive plants to the Philippine Islands, whose soil rejected them, blaming it on the colonial policies imposed by the major European empires.

Courtesy of the artist

Azuma Makoto (Fukuoka, Japón, 1976)

After moving to Tokyo to complete his musical training, Azuma Makoto began working in a florist's to earn a living. It was then that he began to explore the organic beauty of flowers, and to try his hand at flower arranging and what he understood to be "botanical sculpture". Thanks to his floral productions he rose to fame as a pioneer in this field. Winner of the Wallpaper* Design Award for Best Bloomers (2019) and the D&AD Yellow Pencil Award in the Crafts for Design category, Makoto has worked with all media to produce his floral pieces and video in particular to digitise images of floral forms throughout the seasons. He has also collaborated with the brands Dior, Swarovski, Fendi and Hermès, and has exhibited his work in New York, Fukuoka, Dusseldorf, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong and Paris. Makoto is the author of the book *Floral Art: Makoto Azuma* (2020), in which he presents more than sixty projects that provide an insight into his passion. He currently owns the famous flower shop Haute Couture Jardins des Fleurs in Tokyo.



Drop Time vol. 38 up 90s loop (2021)

Drop Time vol. 36 full 90s loop (2021)

Single-channel video, 90" loop.

Makoto shows the transience and fragility of natural beauty through blossoms. Using two still lifes – one featuring the cherry blossom and the other the blossoming of common flowers –, he creates an explosive beauty associated with the birth of spring, albeit ephemeral, as seen when the breeze or rain moves the flowers and causes the flowers to shed their petals.

Courtesy of the artist and the Azuma Makoto Studio

Cecilia Paredes (Lima, Perú, 1950)

Cecilia Paredes is a Peruvian artist based in Philadelphia (USA), where she is a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania. She studied Fine Arts at the Catholic University in Lima, at the Cambridge Arts and Crafts School in England and at the Scuola del Nudo in Rome. Her career has been marked by her frequent changes of residence. She currently works and resides between Lima and Philadelphia. Her work ranges from monumental installations to small pieces reconstructed from natural elements. Her exhibition projects have been shown at Animalario (Córdoba, 2021), curated by Margarita de Aizpuru; at the Latitudes Festival (Huelva, 2020); at the University Museum of Navarra (Pamplona, 2019), curated by Blanca Berlín; at the Tabacalera Art Promotion Space (Madrid, 2015); at the Vladimir Palace (St. Petersburg, 2013) and at the Bogotá Photography Museum (2013), among other places. She has also participated in the Havana Biennial, the Venice Biennial and the Canary Islands Architecture Biennial, as well as in several photography festivals. Some of the awards she has received include the Iberoamericana de Toro Award (Zamora, 2022), the Pingyao International Photography Festival Award for Excellence (Pingyao, 2015) and the First Honourable Mention at the Central American Biennial (Managua, 2002).



Distant Paradise (2010) / Hands of Paradise (2011)/ Breeze (2012)

Photographs in light boxes (100 × 100 cm).

Dafne (2022)

Ink print with acrylic resin on aluminium frame (143 × 85 cm).

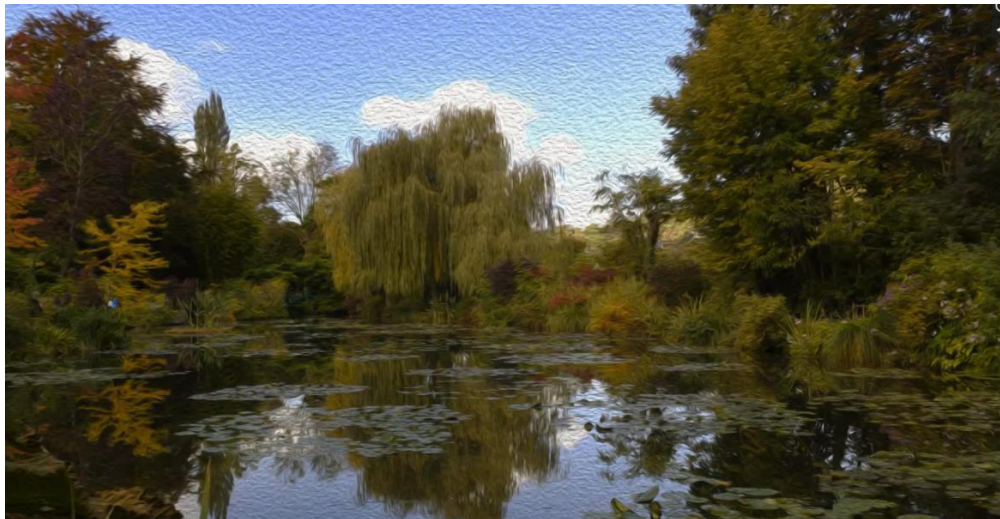
Having lived in several countries, Cecilia Paredes represents her life's journey in her artwork. Her pieces evoke the pain of loss and separation from origin, but also what she calls "the migrant's secret desires". In her photo performances, the artist combines parts of her body with flowers, stems and leaves, blending in with the landscape and camouflaging herself amidst the flowers, while showing a migrant's ability to adapt to the environment.

Courtesy of the artist and the Blanca Berlín Gallery

www.blancaberlingaleria.com

Han Sungpil (Seúl, Corea del Sur, 1972)

Han Sungpil graduated in Fine Arts with a major in photography from Chung-Ang University in Seoul and continued his studies at Kingston University (London). His work focuses on photography, video and installation, although some critics believe that all his work begins and ends with photography. The environment is the artist's preferred subject matter, but he is also interested in urban life in the cities whose façades he transforms by experimenting with reality and its portrayal. His artistic production has been the focal point of numerous solo exhibitions in galleries, biennials and museums around the world, such as the Blanca Berlin Gallery in Madrid, the Museum of Photography in Seoul and the Selasar Sunaryo Art Space in Indonesia. He has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions such as the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt, the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in South Korea and the Dubai Design District in the United Arab Emirates.



Homage to Monet (2016)

Single-channel video, 1'16" loop.

The Korean artist's homage to Claude Monet raises the urgent need to preserve the environment. From Giverny, where Monet spent his twilight years, Sungpil invites us to engage in aesthetic contemplation with a gaze that pauses at a mere place of passage, by the lakeshore, where anonymous visitors appear and disappear.

Courtesy of the artist and the Blanca Berlin Gallery

www.blancaberlingaleria.com

Javier Garcerá (Puerto de Sagunto, Valencia, España, 1967)

Javier Garcerá earned his PhD in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and is currently a professor in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Malaga. His work is based on a theoretical reflection on modernity and post-modernity, exploring the limits between the subject and the work, reality and perception, through the notion of “emptiness” present in Daoism and Mahayana Buddhism. Garcerá has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Spain and abroad in venues such as the Ferrán Cano Gallery (Barcelona, 1997), the Cannaviello Studio (Milan, 2002), the Contemporary Art Space (Osaka, 2002), the Jorge Shirley Gallery (Portugal, 2008), the Piana dei Colli Art Centre (Palermo, 2013), the Crucero del Hospital Real (Granada, 2019) and the Daniel Cuevas Gallery (Madrid, 2022). His career also includes a scholarship from the Spanish Academy in Rome and a scholarship from the Pilar and Joan Miró Foundation, as well as the Enate Collection Prize (2022) and the National Painting Prize of the Association of Quantity Surveyors and Technical Architects of the Principality of Asturias (2006).



And If They Are Not Like Light (2020)

Acrylic on silk (110 × 110 cm).

Garcerá endeavours to portray emptiness as the possibility of everything that exists. The artist is an orientalist who finds resources in traditional Chinese and Indian culture to approach painting from nothingness, in which he immerses himself to return to an origin from where he can devise the sensitive forms that lend themselves to aesthetic contemplation. It is no coincidence that he paints floral patterns and objects of various kinds on silk, which come together amidst the confusion.

Courtesy of the artist and the Daniel Cuevas Gallery

www.galeriadanielcuevas.com

Jean Marie del Moral (Montoire, Francia, 1952)

Jean Marie del Moral started his career working for the newspaper *L'Humanité*, producing features of social interest. After extensive coverage in New York, Toronto and Portugal during the Carnation Revolution, the artist was introduced to the world of Joan Miró, with whom he had the privilege of sharing his studio, as well as with many other artists. His work has been exhibited in different galleries and museums on a national and international scale. In 1988, he participated in the Rencontres d'Arles photography festival. In 2004, he published the book *Barceló, fotografías de Jean Marie del Moral* (Barceló, Photographs of Jean Marie del Moral) and also exhibited at the Valencia Institute of Modern Art (IVAM, Valencia), the Conde Duque Cultural Centre (Madrid) and the Carles Taché Gallery (Barcelona), among others. He has also collaborated for years with publications such as *Vogue Spain*, *Vogue France*, *Madame Figaro* and *El País Semanal*. He is also the author and director of the documentaries *Picasso y la tauromaquia* (Picasso and Bullfighting, 1993) and *Los estudios de Barceló* (Barceló's Studios, 1991).



Giverny (2010)

Photograph from the series of the same name (120 × 150 cm).

Throughout his career, Jean Marie del Moral has been capturing the lives of artists in their studios or in their usual places of work. Now he takes us to the garden at Giverny, which enthralled Claude Monet almost eight decades ago and that he visited in 2010. The photographer invites us to imagine the Impressionist painter strolling around the Japanese pond and the Clos Normand, admiring its greenery, his pipe in hand.

Courtesy of the artist

Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, España, 1955)

Photomontage has been a key tool for Joan Fontcuberta to challenge the boundaries between reality and fiction to explore what is real and where the truth lies. Considered one of the great contemporary masters of photography, this winner of the National Photography Prize (1998), National Literature Prize in the essay category (2011), for the book *La cámara de Pandora* (Pandora's Camera) and the Hasselblad International Photography Prize (2013), claims that, "as an author, I often have to hide or camouflage myself so as not to be there". Fontcuberta defines himself as a visual artist, for whom writing is a way of thinking about his work in relation to his time, society, history and what other image-makers have done before him. All his texts have an autobiographical element, asserting that, "where the eye cannot see, the camera can". Fontcuberta is a photographer, artist and critic who, besides the aforementioned essay, has also published *Herbarium* (1985), *La furia de las imágenes* (The Fury of Images, 2016) and *Imatges latents* (Latent Images, 2022). Moreover, he is also an avid promoter of visual culture, organising events such as the Catalan Photography Conferences and collaborating in the creation of the Primavera Fotográfica de Barcelona (Barcelona Photography Spring) in the 1980s. He has also curated several exhibitions such as "Idas y Caos. Vanguardias fotográficas en España 1920-1945" (Whims and Chaos. Avant-Garde Photography in Spain 1920-1945) and "Creación Fotográfica en España 1968-88" (Photography Creation in Spain 1968-88), not to mention numerous solo exhibitions in museums and art centres around the world.



From the "Herbarium" series: *Dendrita Victoriosa* (1982), *Himenea Flaccida* (1983), *Mullerpolis Plunfis* (1983), *Fungus Mungus* (1983), *Pirulera Salbitana* (1983) y *Flor Miguera* (1984)

Six photographs on gelatin silver-bromide prints with selenium coating (52 × 42 cm).

With Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932) as an essential point of reference in the construction of the plant universe, Fontcuberta piques our interest with these images of flowers and plants from an unknown herbarium. They are flowers handmade with materials found in the outskirts of Barcelona, imitating real ones, proposing a second truth for us to challenge what we believe we are seeing.

Courtesy of the artist and the 1Mira Madrid Gallery <https://1miramadrid.com/>

Lee Lee Nam (Damyang, Corea del Sur, 1969)

For Lee Lee Nam, art, technology and science are inextricably linked with tradition. After graduating from Chosun University with a Degree in Sculpture in 1995, he developed an interest in animation and received his PhD in New Media from Yonsei University. Throughout his career, the artist has demonstrated that video is the best medium for creation, producing large-scale productions in which he ignores the limits of animation and stop motion techniques. His work has earned international acclaim, winning awards such as the New Digital Award (2020), and the Nanjing International Art Festival Best Artists & Audience Award (2017). Lee Lee Nam has participated in solo and group exhibitions around the world, from the Venice Biennial to the Saatchi Gallery in London and the National Museum of India. Since 2015, he has been teaching Media Contents in the Culture Technology Institute at Chonnam National University.



Ruins Mona Lisa (2016)

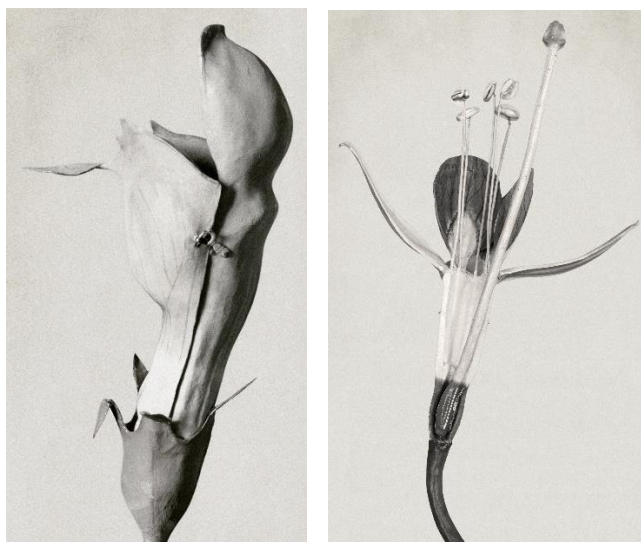
Single-channel video, 5' 40" loop

The Korean artist's interest in endowing masterpieces of art history with movement has led him to manipulate works by Velázquez, Vermeer and, in this case, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. Lee Lee Nam presents planes that appear to bomb the Mona Lisa, some spots bursting into flames that turn into flowers, until they ultimately cover the entire image and make it vanish.

Courtesy of the artist and Clara Jeong

Linarejos Moreno (Madrid, España, 1974)

Linarejos Moreno is a visual artist, researcher and teacher, whose work reflects on the impact of science, technology and industry on visual culture. She teaches on the MIAC (Master's Degree in Art and Creation Research) at the UCM (Complutense University of Madrid). Currently, she is also artistic director of the Master's in Photography at PHotoESPAÑA. She has been a Fulbright scholar, a visiting researcher in the Department of Art History at Rice University in Houston, an artist in residence on the ISCP (International Studio & Curatorial Program) in New York and a visiting professor in the Department of Photography/Digital Media at the University of Houston. Linarejos Moreno's work has earned widespread national and international acclaim with exhibitions such as *Tabularia. Laboratorios de Ciencia e Imaginación* (Tabularia. Laboratories of Science and Imagination), at the RJB (Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid), *Art Forms in Mechanism and Fragmented Past / Reconstructed Present*, both at the Inman Gallery (Houston), as well as group exhibitions including: *Cambio de rumbo. Colección DKV-Colección INELCOM* (Change of Course. DKV-INELCOM Collection), *En el recuerdo* (In Memory), PHotoESPAÑA (Madrid), *Artifactual Realities*, *Station Museum at Fotofest* (Houston), and *Entre dos mares* (The Meeting of Two Seas, Valencia Biennial).



Art Forms in Mechanism I (2009-2016) / Art Forms in Mechanism XVIII (2009-2016)

Photographs printed by hand on Baryta paper in a methacrylate showcase on a linen background (196 × 120.96 cm).

The books *Unformen der Kunst* (Art Forms in Nature) and *Wundergarten der Natur* (The Magic Garden of Nature) by Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932) are at the root of Linarejos Moreno's photographs. The artist creates flowers from plant elements that recall the world of architecture, science and industry. The large formats he uses are designed to emphasise the aesthetic value of the sublime through the solitude of floral forms and their sensory impact.

Courtesy of the artist and the Daniel Cuevas Gallery

www.galeriadanielcuevas.com

Luo Min (Sichuan, China, 1968)

Luo Min graduated in painting from the China Southwest Normal University, and earned a Master's Degree in Art from the Fine Art Academy of the People's Liberation Army. She currently lives and works between Beijing and Chengdu. Her knowledge of Western realist painting and traditional Chinese painting techniques, such as Gongbi and Mogu, affords her remarkable versatility in her artistic expression, so that she is able to combine a traditional pictorial language with her mastery of other techniques. The artist's work has featured in group and solo exhibitions all over the world, in projects such as *Rostros que desde el silencio nos rondan* (Faces that Haunt Us in the Silence) at the Palacio del Conde de Lombillo Museum (Havana) or *La Poesía Superviviente* (The Surviving Poetry) at the Miguel Marcos Gallery (Barcelona). Her work has also been shown at international art fairs such as Art Beijing (2017), Art Cheng Du (2019) and Arco Madrid (2019).



From the series "Poetry of Fallen Flowers" (2017): N.º 2 (25 × 25 cm), N.º 3 (26 × 23 cm), N.º 11 (25 × 25 cm), N.º 12 (28 × 28 cm), N.º 17 (28 × 28 cm), N.º 19 (35,5 × 37,5 cm)

Chinese watercolour and ink on paper.

Calligraphy, poetry and painting in ancient China came to constitute a unique medium under the name of "brush art", which was the tool through which the artist's feelings were conveyed on paper. Luo Min's work seems to hark back to the work of the poet and painter Wang Wei (701-761), justifying the overlapping of layers whereby the landscape appears in the foreground and pushes the human figure into the background, producing a double or triple reality.

Courtesy of the artist and Miguel Marcos Gallery

www.miguelpmarcos.com

Manuel V. Alonso (Madrid, España, 1954)

Manuel V. Alonso completed his studies at the Free Academy of Visual Art and went on to further his training in drawing, composition and structure in The Hague. His art practice combines training in the Netherlands with influences from traditional Chinese culture and international contemporary art, yielding a creative blend of techniques that include painting, calligraphy and poetry, associated with the cultural traditions of the Asian continent. Alonso's work explores unity, multiplicity and the representation of nature through elements such as botany and the natural sciences. His exhibition projects include *Gaijin* at Casa Asia (Barcelona, 2004), *Visual Haikus* at the Ludwig Foundation (Havana, 2007), *Natural Poems* at the Cervantes Institute (Belgrade, 2011), *Sea Poems* in the Mao Space (Shanghai, 2014) and *Seas of China* at the Utopia Parkway Gallery (Madrid, 2019). He has also participated in the following group exhibitions *El Jardín de la Utopía* (The Garden of Utopia) at the Eburne Gallery (Madrid, 2010), *Papeles de Asia* (Asian Papers) at Casa DECOR (Madrid, 2011) and the 1st Wuhan Ink Biennial (Wuhan, 2017). He has also contributed to various publications and projects such as *Tintas Comunicantes* (Communicating Inks, Madrid, 2006), *El jardín japonés* (Japanese Garden, Madrid, 2015), *Flowers. Drawings* (Shanghai, 2018) and *La Risa de las Flores* (The Laughter of Flowers) at the RJB (Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, 2022).



Hortus Floridus (2020-2022). *Flowers. Drawings 1* (75,5 × 54 cm) | *Flowers. Drawings 2* (72 × 51,5 cm) | *Flowers. Drawings 3* (73 × 51 cm) | *Flowers. Drawings 4* (36 × 72,5 cm) | *Flowers. Drawings 5* (51 × 39 cm) | *Flowers. Drawings 6* (40 × 58 cm)

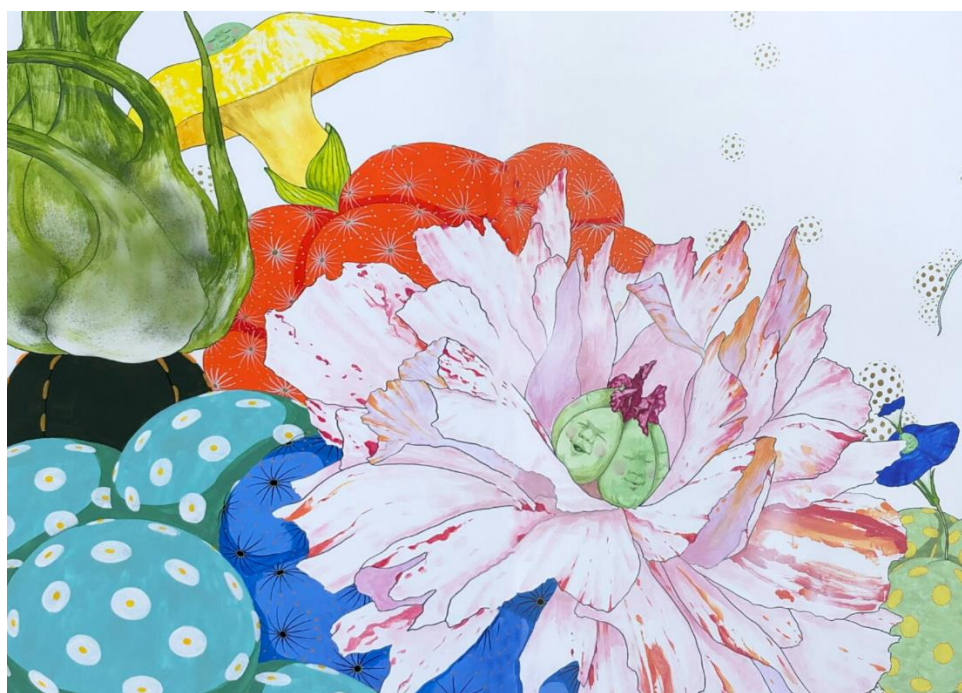
Six burlap-lined sketchbooks with handmade Chinese rice paper. Mixed media.

In 1614, Crispijn van de Passe the Younger (c. 1590-1670) collected his botanical illustrations in *Hortus Floridus*, a point of reference in 17th-century botanical iconography. The sketchbooks of the same name presented by Manuel V. Alonso can be understood as a test garden where he plants and nurtures his floral compositions, and where drawing and writing find a haven with branches, leaves and flowers that only the artist is familiar with.

Courtesy of the artist

Mari Ito (Tokio, Japón, 1980)

Japanese artist Mari Ito earned a Degree in Fine Arts from Tokyo's Joshibi University, where she specialised in Nihonga painting. It originated during the Meiji era in response to the Western influence on Japanese painting and is characterised by the use of traditional techniques and materials. In 2003, she held her first exhibition, before beginning to work with the Key Gallery in Tokyo, and in 2006 she moved to Barcelona, where she currently resides. In this city she completed her training in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Since then Mari Ito has regularly exhibited her work in museums, art centres and galleries in Spain and Japan. Her main influences include, on the one hand, Yayoi Kusama and Takashi Murakami and even Manga culture; and, on the other, artists such as Georgia O'Keeffe due to her interpretation of floral themes. Her work has been shown at the Joshibi Art Museum (Kanagawa, 2004), the Zenbu Gallery (2007) and the Kannon Gyo and Wa Gallery (2009) in Barcelona, the Sala d'Art Hostales 1701 (Girona, 2009), Vinart (Igualada, 2011), the Zeit Foto Salon and the Nap Gallery (Tokyo, 2012), the Lázaro Galdiano Museum (Madrid, 2019) and the RJB (Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, 2022).



Biombo (2021)

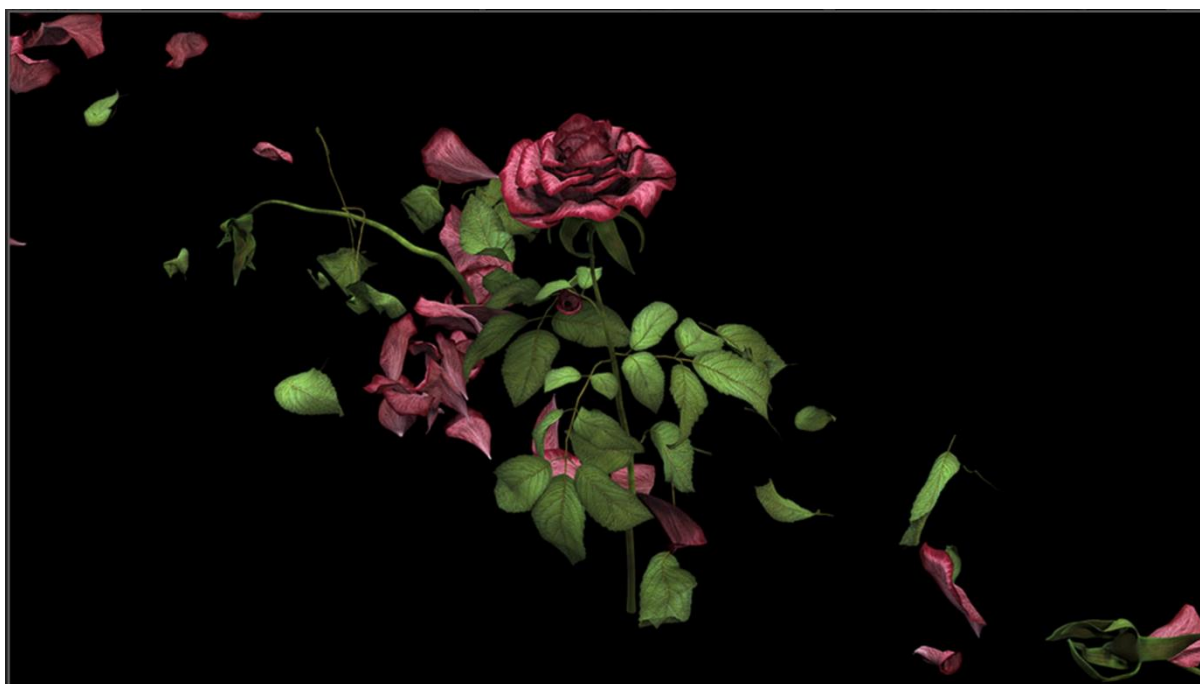
Painting installation. Mixed media on four iron doors, double-sided (180 × 360 cm).

Flowers have been the virtually unique and exclusive subject matter of Mari Ito's work, the legacy of a cultural tradition she inherited from her childhood, drawing surrounded by her mother's floral arrangements. Mari Ito's flowers adopt an almost human or even animal-like expression, as if possessed by a sort of enchantment in a universe created by her alone.

Courtesy of the artist

Marina Núñez (Palencia, España, 1966)

Marina Núñez is a multidisciplinary artist with a Degree in Fine Arts from the University of Salamanca and a PhD in Fine Arts from the University of Castilla-La Mancha. Based on the analysis and deconstruction of female iconography, her work represents, pictorially or videographically, post-human identities through images of mutant, mestizo and multiple bodies. Núñez currently lives between Madrid and Pontevedra, and teaches in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Vigo. She has held solo exhibitions in public centres such as the Reina Sofía National Museum and Art Centre (Madrid), the Cervantes Institute (Paris) and the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum (Madrid). As far as her participation in group projects is concerned, the following are particularly noteworthy: *La realidad y el deseo* (Reality and Desire, Fundación Miró, Barcelona), 1st International Art Biennial (Buenos Aires National Museum of Fine Arts), *Big Sur. Neue Spanische Kunst* (Big Sur. New Spanish Art, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin), *Pintura mutante* (Mutant Painting, MARCO, Vigo) and *Skin, Wellcome Collection* (London). Her awards include the BEEP Collection Award at the ARCO Madrid Fair and the Cristina Masaveu Peterson Collection Award – JustMad 2020.



Heroic Flowers (rose), 1' 43" (2021) and Heroic Flowers (lilies), 1' 48" (2021)

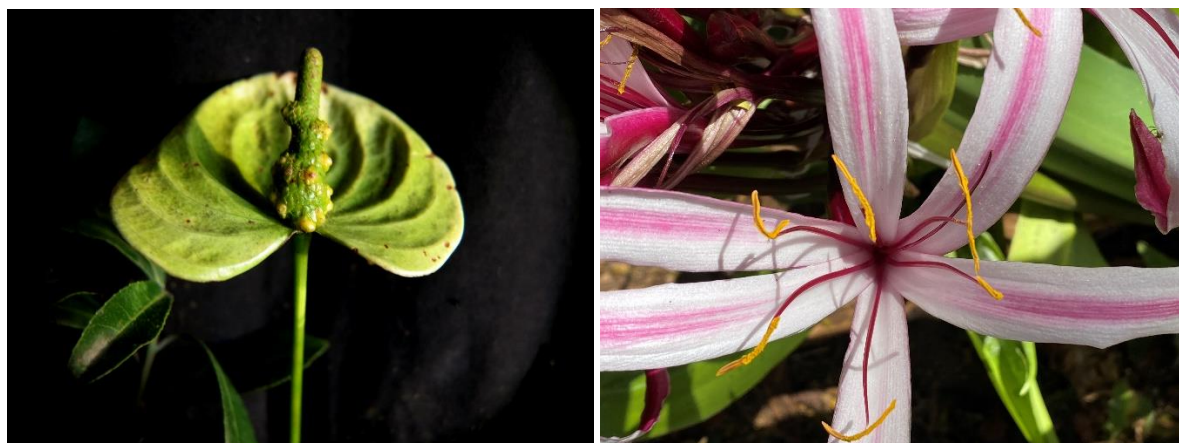
Screens with wooden frame (75 × 52 cm). Single-channel video and audio by Luis de la Torre.

In these videos, the artist engages in dialogue with the floral theme of Baroque painting, but far from revealing the fragility and vulnerability of flowers, she defends their resilience. She compares this staying power to the heroic women who, despite only been given access to a minor pictorial genre such as still lifes, managed to overcome obstacles to play a role they were denied in the history of art.

Courtesy of the artist

Marisa González (Bilbao, España, 1943)

Marisa González graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Complutense University of Madrid and then went on to study in the Department of Generative Systems at the Art Institute of Chicago and at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design in Washington D.C. Her artistic career is marked by a systematic relationship with the new information and communication technologies, exploring analogue and digital printing techniques based on fragment and repetition, from the photocopier to faxart, the computer and the portable video camera. Her work has been shown in more than 60 solo exhibitions and 150 group exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale of Architecture, the MNCARS (Reina Sofía National Museum and Art Centre) and the CCCB (Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona). But special mention should be made of the project *La Fábrica* at the Fundación Telefónica (PHE, Madrid, 2000) and the retrospective exhibition *Registros Domesticados* (Domesticated Records) at Tabacalera (Madrid, 2015). González currently runs workshops, participates in round tables and gives lectures on the changes that new technologies have brought about in contemporary artistic creation. The artist is mentioned, among other publications, in *Arte en España (1939-2015)* [Art in Spain (1939-2015)] by Jorge Luis Marzo and Patricia Mayayo. In 2020, she received the MAV Award for her career as best artist/creator, granted by the association Mujeres en las Artes Visuales.



One Hundred Flowers of Asia (2015-2022)

Video installation of digital photography with seven screens. Various sizes: 41,5 × 23 cm (1), 39 × 26 cm (1) and 27,5 × 17,5 cm (5).

In her studio, Marisa González nurtures all sorts of fruits and flowers that she photographs while allowing them to complete their cycle, from life to death. The artist lets the impact of time make itself felt on their bodies to the point of ultimate decay, when their forms can be likened to human organs that, in many cases, are reminiscent of their sexuality.

Courtesy of the artist and the Freijoo Gallery

Nicolás Combarro (A Coruña, España, 1979) & Wawi Navarroza (Manila, Filipinas, 1979)

Nicolás Combarro studied at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), where he earned a Degree in Audiovisual Communication. As a multidisciplinary artist, he has worked with different media and supports, forging a dialogue with the processes of transforming architecture and its sociopolitical context. He has exhibited in museums, art centres, international galleries and biennials (Manila Biennial, Munich's Kreativquartier and the Spanish Pavilion at the 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture). He has also received grants and awards for his work, and has published books that include *Arquitectura espontánea* (Spontaneous Architecture, Fundación La Caixa), *Arquitectura y resistencia* (Architecture and Resistance, RAER/Cabeza de Chorlito), and *Interventions* (MEP). In 2004, together with fellow photographer Alberto García-Alix and his brother Carlos García-Alix, he created the production company No hay penas. Along with them, he participated in the MNCARS (Reina Sofía National Museum and Art Centre) exhibition *De donde no se vuelve* (From Where There Is No Return) in 2008. As a documentary filmmaker in 2017 he made the film *Alberto García-Alix: la línea de sombra* (Alberto García-Alix: The Shadow Line).

Wawi Navarroza is a multidisciplinary Filipino artist with a Degree in Communication Arts from La Salle University (Manila), completing her studies at the International Center of Photography in New York with a scholarship from the Asian Cultural Council. She subsequently completed a Master's Degree in Photography at the IED in Madrid. In 2015, she founded Thousandfold, a contemporary photography platform and the first photobook with Thousandfold Small Press as its publishing division. She is also the author of the books *DOMINION and Hunt & Gather, Terraria*, launched respectively at Offprint Paris and PS1MoMA. She has exhibited widely on a national and international scale and has received numerous awards and grants (Asian Cultural Council Fellowship Grant New York and Cultural Center of the Philippines Award).



Collage 3
Estructuras de ocio coexisten en los espacios arquitectónicos, integradas de forma original, como esta cancha de baloncesto en lo alto de una casa. El jardín silvestre es intuitivo, audaz y sabio. Lejos de la utopía de los jardines botánicos, bajo cuidado y conservación, estos bosques de bolsillo emergentes son tan creativos como ingeniosos, recogiendo lo que está disponible y expresándose en toda su posibilidad.



Collage 1
Manila es una ciudad en constante construcción/reconstrucción. Las técnicas tradicionales se aplican también a la edificación en altura, generando un andamiaje de madera de resultado casi escultórico. La vegetación que crece salvaje en la ciudad forma una simbiosis con lo arquitectónico. Algunas plantas invasoras y malas hierbas, han encontrado de alguna manera una forma de crecer y adaptarse espontáneamente al medio estresante y hostil en el que eligieron crecer, inmóviles, construyendo lentamente un "bosque emergente".

Collage (1-6) (2017)

Photomontages and texts
(70 × 50 cm).

Using collage, Combarro combines photomontage and text to produce an analogy with the buildings in Manila, where Navarroza, the artist with whom he shares this project, lives. In the Philippine capital, the invasive vegetation of spontaneous plants adapts and joins small makeshift buildings, creating an organic symbiosis with the ground and walls.

Courtesy of the artists

Nobuyoshi Araki (Tokio, Japón, 1940)

Nobuyoshi Araki studied photography and film at Chiba University and graduated in 1963 as an engineer specialising in photography and film directing. After working in advertising for the Dentsu company, he became a full-time art photographer in 1972. Much of his work documents everyday life in Tokyo: clouds, flowers, lively karaoke bars, cityscapes and ordinary people, recorded in his trademark informal style. Araki soon earned international recognition for his Tokyo diaries in b/w and colour and for his photographs of women tied with ropes according to the Japanese Shunga practice. He first worked in an advertising agency at Dentsu where he married Yoko in 1971. Following their honeymoon, he published *Sentimental Journey*, and on her death in 1990 he collected all the photographs taken during her final days in the book *Winter Journey*, bringing the cycle of her life to a close. His work is featured in major public and private collections around the world, including London's Tate Modern and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and he has received numerous awards, including the Grand Prize at the 1994 Japan Interior Design Forum. He has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the *Effetto Araki* exhibition at Santa Maria della Scala in 2019 and *ARAKI. TOKIO* at the Pinakothek der Moderne modern art museum in Munich in 2017. Araki has published over 400 photobooks, has produced films and has photographed musicians that include Björk and Lady Gaga.



From the "Tokyo Diary" series (1989-2003)

C-print photographs (3) and colour photographs (2) (various sizes).

From the "Untitled" series (2018)

C-print photographs (2) (various sizes).

The beautiful and the sinister characterise floral forms, superimposing their appearance and disappearance, which for the artist renders their beauty obscene, given its transient nature. Flowers are an iconic theme for Araki, who sees them as wombs where a life begins and the future is forged; for this reason, his photographs often verge on the pornographic.

Courtesy of the López de la Serna Contemporary Art Centre

Pablo Merchante (Sevilla, España, 1979)

Pablo Merchante began studying music at the age of six and earned a Degree in Fine Arts from the University of Seville. He later completed a Master's Degree in Art: Idea and Production. He currently works and lives between Madrid and Bollullos Par del Condado, his hometown. He has received grants (the Vázquez Díaz grant from Huelva Provincial Council, a grant from Genoa's Bogliasco Foundation and a grant from Slovenia's Art Cicle Foundation), as well as the First International Paul Ricard Painting Award, Second Prize from the University of Jaén and was a finalist in the BMW Awards. He has also taken part in several artistic residencies and his works belong to collections such as the UNIA and the Santo Domingo Museum of Modern Art.



Primary Time (to BJA) (2022)

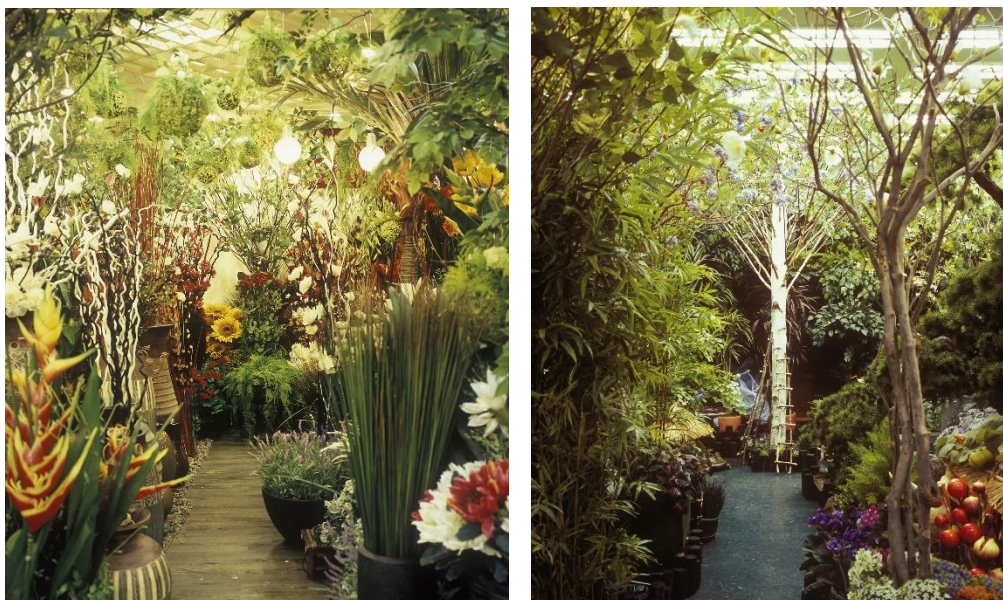
Oil, spray, wax and plaster on linen (240 × 190 cm).

Merchante's predilection for large formats invites us to delve deeper into his flowers, the product of the wild language to which he refers as an inescapable force that takes hold of him and that he conveys in what he paints. The result is an explosion of colour that he cannot contain, as if the flowers he paints defy any rule or standard and grow freely on his canvases.

Courtesy of the artist and We Collect

Paula Anta (Madrid, España, 1977)

Paula Anta holds a Degree and PhD in Fine Arts from the Complutense University of Madrid, completing her studies in Frankfurt, Cologne, the Spanish College in Paris and the Spanish Royal Academy in Rome. As a multidisciplinary artist, Anta uses photography, video and installation in her artistic practice, focusing on the interplay between nature and artificiality, based on their merging with human-created structures. She has shown her work in group and solo exhibitions at the Real Jardín Botánico, the Costume Museum, Casa de América and the Canal de Isabel II, all in Madrid and the CCCB in Barcelona, as well as at the PHE International Photography Festival (PHotoESPAÑA) and the ARCO Madrid Fair. The artist has received major awards, such as the 11th Pilar Citoler International Biennial Contemporary Photography Award (2021), the UNESCO Centre of Extremadura International Prize (2020), the Kells Collection Prize (2019) and the Community of Madrid's Estampa Prize (2016), while also participating in projects in collaboration with organisations such as Oxfam Intermón, Samsung and Telemadrid.



Daegu 03 (2008)

Seoul 01 (2008)

C-print photographs (188 × 158 cm).

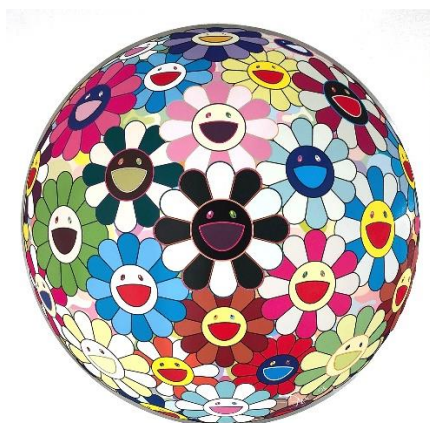
These two photographs are part of the series “Paraísos artificiales” (“Artificial Paradises”), which she made in three Korean cities (Seoul, Busan and Daegu), struck by the electric colours of artificial plants and flowers. Anta explores this plasticised nature, which is intended to imitate the perfection of natural forms, but without escaping the fact that they are made of synthetic molecules.

Courtesy of the artist and the Daniel Cuevas Gallery

www.galeriadanielcuevas.com

Takashi Murakami (Tokio, Japón, 1962)

Takashi Murakami received his BFA, MFA and PhD from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, where he studied Nihonga, a traditional Japanese style of painting. His artistic production is based on a play of contrasts between high culture and low culture, between past and present, ingenuousness and perversion, between East and West, humour and social criticism. Murakami is known for having coined the term “superflat”, which refers both to the two-dimensional technique of traditional Japanese painting and to the superficiality that characterises consumer society. He works with all media and his work encompasses artistic creation as well as design and industry. Painting, sculpture and animation are the mediums in which his artistic expression comes together, both in the world of art and in the world of fashion. Known worldwide for his work as seen in ©Murakami at Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum and *Murakami Versailles* at the Palace of Versailles, he has collaborated with various commercial brands such as Louis Vuitton. Murakami is also a curator, art critic and founder of Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd., a major art creation and artist management corporation, organising international projects such as the GEISAI fair. *Superflat* and *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan’s Exploding Subculture* are among the artist’s notable books.



Flowerball 3D Blood V (2011)
Lithograph, edition 300, no. 51 (71 × 71 cm).

Flowerball Red(3D) The Magic Flute (2009)
Lithograph, edition 300, no. 118 (71 × 71 cm).

Flowers with smiling human faces are one of the most characteristic symbols of Murakami’s work. These smiling flowers conceal, however, the trauma of the dark emotions still being experienced in Japan since the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The artist asserts local identity and, at the same time, incorporates elements of contemporary Japanese culture from anime, manga and otaku culture.

Courtesy of the Guntrian Gallery
www.galeriaguntrian.com

Teresa Esteban (Madrid, España, 1960)

Teresa Esteban studied Fine Arts in Madrid, where she earned her PhD from the Complutense University of Madrid in 1992. Her work addresses themes such as identity, memory and communication, through the use of photography, video, installation and drawing. Her work has been recognised with awards and grants such as the First Pinto Sculpture Prize (2022), the International Wood Sculpture Symposium Award (2019) and the Sculpture Network International Award for her artistic career (2018). She has also exhibited her work in numerous national and international institutions, such as the Galileo Cultural Centre in Madrid (1997), the Cervantes Institute in Rome and Milan (2001), the College of Spain in Paris (2007), the International Holy Quran Exhibition in Tehran (2014), the Arab Centre in Madrid (2014), the Museum of Contemporary Art of Tetouan in Morocco (2015), the Misk Art Festival in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia (2018) and the Chiang Mai City Arts and Cultural Center (2019).



From the “Chiang Mai” series (2019)

The Frangipani 01 / The Frangipani 02 Jasmines and Golden Rain / The Frangipani 03 On the Map of Chiang Mai / The Frangipani 04 Lotus / The Frangipani 05 Orchids

Mixed media on parchment (70 × 50 cm).

In this series of paintings the artist combines physical maps with botanical illustrations. She connects city and nature using flowers as a medium. Esteban wants to bring us closer to nature to raise awareness of the need to look after the natural environment to ensure our survival. She also shows Thai gardeners and landscapers' inclination to take more interest in ornamental plants than in growing plants for consumption.

Courtesy of the artist

Yasumasa Morimura (Osaka, Japón, 1951)

Yasumasa Morimura earned a Degree in Fine Arts from the Kyoto City University of Art, where he studied design until 1978. During that time, he developed a keen interest in Western art history and critical theory, which influenced his subsequent artistic production characterised by the appropriation and recontextualisation of images and themes from Western visual culture. He has held numerous solo exhibitions around the world, including at the Kyocera Art Museum (Kyoto), the Artizon Museum (Tokyo), the Japan Society (New York) and the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow). Morimura has received several awards, most notably as a finalist for the Hugo Boss Award in 1996 and as an artist-in-residence at the Kyoto International Arts Research Centre from 2004 to 2006. In addition, he has been actively involved in projects such as the Yokohama Triennale in 2014 as artistic director and in the Osaka Contemporary Art Centre's First Contemporary Art Competition in 2004 in its direction and production.



An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Four Parrots) (2001)

Photograph (120 × 100 cm).

Morimura is known for his self-portraits of masterpieces to which he pays tribute and, at the same time, pays homage and parodies. In this case, characterised as Frida Kahlo, he challenges cultural, social and sexual identity, surprising the viewer and tearing down the gender and geographical boundaries that separate East and West.

Courtesy of the artist, the Olor Visual Collection (Barcelona) and the Ernesto Ventós NASEVO Foundation

<https://olorvisual.com> <https://nasevo.com>

After the fog, the first flowers

Orient and orientalism from modernism to modernity

Menene Gras Balaguer, curator

The exhibition project presented here explores the possible connections between the artistic practices and works of twenty-four contemporary Spanish, Latin American and Asian artists, and their respective contributions to the reflection on the relationship between art, nature, science and technology, reinterpreting our understanding of floral art in the course of the history of art. It is a project in the making, and is therefore open-ended, given that the plethora of interpretations of the floral theme since Impressionism and the historical avant-gardes of the 20th century has spanned movements and trends right up to the present day, without seeming to run out, but quite the contrary in fact. Besides the interest in botany since the 16th and 17th centuries and its impact on the flourishing of flower painting as an independent genre in the Baroque period, there is also the interest in ecology due to the adverse impact of human development on the environment. Scientists and the media have stressed the need to redress the consequences arising from the destruction of ecosystems that alter the existence of all living creatures, sounding alarm bells for us to take action accordingly.

The complex dynamics jeopardising the planet's sustainability have led to a growing interest in research into the relationships between species and between species and the environment. Contemporary aesthetic trends cannot be impervious to the array of phenomena resulting from the human ecological footprint, which are of concern to the natural, human and social sciences. As indicators of current environmental imbalances, they draw our attention to certain changes in vegetation cover and the erosion of biodiversity or the extinction of certain animal species. The mutations that have occurred and continue to occur force us to think about the world and to halt both climate change and the progressive destruction of biodiversity that civilisation has generated since the beginning of the Anthropocene. We cannot refuse to see reality, because the future of humanity is at stake. The proposals brought together here echo, whether intentionally or not, the threat that looms over the dystopian fate of the world we live in, unless we respond in time to avert a global disaster. Their exaltation and praise of nature is the opposite paradigm, by means of which nature's preservation is encouraged.

Alberto Baraya, Ana Nance, Antoni Muntadas, Azuma Makoto, Cecilia Paredes, Javier Garcerá, Jean Marie del Moral, Joan Fontcuberta, Lee Lee Nam, Linarejos Moreno, Luo Min, Manuel V. Alonso, Mari Ito, Marina Núñez, Marisa González, Nicolás Combarro & Wawi Navarroza, Nobuyoshi Araki, Pablo Merchante, Paula Anta, Takashi Murakami, Teresa Esteban and Yasumasa Morimura are the artists participating in this project, sharing an aesthetic experience that extends beyond the floral theme. Regardless of the geographies of the countries from which they hail and the cultural identities they adopt, they are brought together based on the uniqueness of each reinterpretation, without seeking any explicit similarities that would highlight the importance of the works presented. The common features are plant forms, whose depiction invites us to explore a number of constants that, although not always evident, are nonetheless decisive in terms of their contextualisation. It is a question of bringing together works in every medium, which in themselves hold an artistic and aesthetic value,



but whose semantic interpretation changes according to their arrangement in a given composition. The very assembly of such pieces is contingent on the venue where they are based and to which they are adapted, by sharing a subject matter such as the floral theme in this case and its individual interpretation by each of the artists. The venue is Casa Vicens, one of the most emblematic Modernista buildings of Catalan Modernisme, and of the floral art that is typical of the architectural ornamentation of the façades and interiors of its city buildings.

This means that the setting in which these works are shown is not neutral and somewhat determines the project's contents, which in itself is superimposed on the existing spaces, without being able to eschew the connotations of an architecture in which the existing floral forms are part of its identity. Flowers are imperative: the floral ornamentation of Modernisme is inextricably linked to the presence of flowers in Egyptian architecture and in the geometric aesthetics of Arab influence. The burgeoning of floral themes in contemporary art can be traced back to the history of painting, from the Renaissance and the Baroque, where still life painting and vanitas were no longer a secondary genre, demanding a place for floral forms on a par with portraiture or landscape painting, and even with religious painting. The surroundings that host the flora on display still hold semiotic connotations, but are nonetheless transformed into a kind of imaginary garden that is home to a world of plants that is a source of fascination for us. The flowers that have been planted in the building, through drawing, painting, photography, moving image and installation, are given access to a new capacity for meaning that they seem to ascribe to themselves, proliferating the dialogues in every direction.

The title *After the fog, first flowers*, draws on two haikus by Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), from which I have taken two verses to merge them together, almost as if to tap into their potential meaning with a simple twist, in the juxtaposition of two images that reveal a before, when a great low cloud covers the valley or the mountain, and an after when it dissipates and the first flowers emerge. The temporal sequence runs from the end of winter to the beginning of spring with the blossoming of the flowers. The transition from one season to another is a revelation and a change that nature experiences and makes us experience in turn in every sense, as if the trees and plants were waking up from a lethargy similar to some animal species that hibernate in order to survive. No verb form is essential in many haiku; correlations are enough to make us imagine the movement between one phenomenon and another, from cause to effect, like when the density of the fog diminishes and reveals what it was hiding. The bursting forth of spring conveys to us the energy that plant forms and animal species have lain dormant, so that flowering can take place or so that the latter can be awakened anew.

Showing the emotions that the poet experiences inwardly before the landscape he describes testifies to the existence of a silent conversation that no one else is listening to. Only the trees, the moon, the river, the flowers. The seasons of the year are part of the "feeling of the landscape", which internally affects the writer before the spectacle offered by Nature, needing to convey the strength of all the elements that come together in each passage and at every stage of life. The aforementioned phrase could be completed with many other verses, such as the one in which the poet identifies a state of mind when flowering takes place, saying "Seeing the new year's / first flowers, I'll live seventy- / five years longer". But then, too, when he speaks of the "sound of the water" or "of the pine trees" and "the wild ducks' cries / dimly white" together with "those of the seagulls" – or when the "moon" and "plum blossoms" begin to appear. This great transformation that nature undergoes is manifested in each new "spring scene", and the person naming it feels part of it in every respect.

The representation of plant forms, and particularly flowers, takes on a similar dimension in the poetry and landscape painting of the Tang dynasty (618-907), in exponents such as Tu Fu or Wang Wei and Li



Po, albeit much earlier in time and in other poetic forms, but associated with moods and as an expression of feelings and emotions that the landscape mirrors for the subject who narrates what happens to them and what is happening, revealing the connections that can occur between what they see inside and outside. Some of Tu Fu's poems about spring make this clear by revealing the harmony between him and the environment, and how both are mutual mirrors for each other. This companionship comforts and redeems him. "Nation fallen, yet nature's alive | The city; spring trees and grasses thrive. | For these sad times the flowers they weep." (Spring Outlook). The humanisation of plants and flowers is a very characteristic phenomenon of this poetry wrought by nostalgia and melancholy, leaving wounds that only the contemplation of beauty can heal. "I only see my sadness as a traveller", says Tu Fu as he goes in search of the flowers that spring brings forth everywhere and "boundlessly", as he walks along the riverbank fearing that a gust of wind will break the stems and that time will wither them at the end of the season.

Flowers grow in traditional Chinese gardens, in classical Japanese gardens and in Persian or Arab gardens. In all gardens, the culture of flowers reflects a philosophy and a religion, as well as an ethic and an aesthetic, which help us to understand the value attributed to them among the plant forms in use in each place. Their temporary nature is often the perfect paradigm of the transience of everything that exists, in the same way that water is, in one sense or another, an essential element for the life of plants and trees in all gardens. Hence the importance of water being channelled through streams or lakes and sound sources to feed the roots with the rest of the nutrients that they absorb from the earth. Flowers are a fleeting expression of life and natural beauty, and their depiction in painting, sculpture and the decorative arts since ancient times attests to the correlation between the natural order and its reproduction in ancient painting and poetry, in what are called still lifes and vanitas, which gained widespread popularity in the Baroque period, as well as in contemporary painting and photography and other media.

The oldest gardens are conceived as an image of paradise, or paradise of paradise on earth, whose representations correspond in cultural terms to a way of understanding life, customs, philosophy and a political system. The history of gardens begins in the East and the first gardens stretch as far back as Mesopotamia in the 6th century BC, where the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were supposedly built along the Euphrates River, disappearing in the 1st century AD. However, no archaeological research can prove the existence of such gardens, nor is there real evidence to dispel doubts over their existence. This leads us to believe that they may just be a dreamlike construct of a place that existed naturally and was not a creation of man. Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Korean gardens share ancient origins and similar aspects or characteristics as well as differences, bearing in mind that they are cultural constructs of identity and are usually designed as oases in which the natural order is mirrored, following codes or rules that determine the variables of the landscape from east to west, and vice versa, of the Silk Road paths.

What has happened since then? In this proposal, several aspects have been taken into account for the purpose of bringing to light a system of connections between the works we wished to show and their authors, as the threads of a story that ties them together and to the place hosting them. Floral representations, both in the East and in the West, occupy an important place in the history of art, not only because they are a recurring theme, but also because of the clear correlations between the different manifestations to which they have progressively lent themselves in all styles, movements and trends. However, beyond their geographical, temporal or environmental contextualisation on the basis of accounts that consider the multidisciplinary nature of the multiple circumstances that arise in each period, altering cultural identities and customs, the respective floral representations that have

been brought together nonetheless warn us of the irreversible changes that the human footprint has wrought on the planet.

The initial idea behind this exhibition project touches on the conscious and unconscious orientalism that can be attributed to certain contemporary works, whose motifs allow certain approaches to be identified, whether in the form of chosen affinities or on the basis of the comparison that can be made between them and the place where they are located. In any case, tying so many things together poses a challenge, not only because of the consequences arising from such an endeavour, but also because the temporary introduction of works that are representative of certain contemporary artistic practices implies the creation of connections between them and the space receiving and hosting them. The exhibition project itself is built on the basis of a narrative that connects and calls into question interdependent languages that reflect semantic representations, which end up organising each other, broadening the meanings that can be drawn from them, without ultimately being able to separate them from the space where they were placed.

On this occasion, the setting is a building representative of Catalan Modernisme and the career of Gaudí. The latter received the commission for the design in 1878, which he ultimately built between 1883 and 1885. Named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005, the refurbishment of the interior and exterior of what is now the house museum was undertaken only a number of years ago in 2014, in an attempt to restore the original architecture, which had undergone various alterations of different forms and magnitudes. The architecture holds particular significance due to its characteristics, as it is not just a space that acts as a vessel to house specific furnishings or decorations. Floral motifs are prevalent, together with the presence of a fauna reminiscent of the fantastic, both in the constructive, functional, ornamental or merely decorative features, and in the internal and external polychromatic elements, which point to the Mozarabic influence. The language of modernism that Gaudí would adopt in his later works is already apparent in what was his earliest design.

The architecture of Casa Vicens is self-contained and can be likened to a construction of craftsmanship that in itself is like a great monumental sculpture. Nevertheless, the opportunity to bring contemporary works into dialogue with some of the key features of its components has undoubtedly been a first step towards making room for the integration of other elements that ultimately lend new meaning to set phrases, on the understanding that these are nomadic units susceptible to constant redefinition, at the mercy of the alterations imposed by space and time. When we speak of places of art, we think of the artist's or writer's studio, the home and the most everyday urban or natural environment, a museum, an art centre or a gallery, the public space and a book. In this respect, given the characteristics of a building as architecturally notable as Casa Vicens, it is hard for the interior space not to strongly oppose its occupation. Nevertheless, the perceived rejection or hostility, when the introduction of elements foreign to the building's structure is proposed, even if only temporarily, ends up being a challenge that involves breaking down invisible walls to achieve this. Finally, it is a matter of forging imaginary dialogues between them and their immediate surroundings, by way of a test of a statement that splits into several levels with an invitation to consider the world as a gamble and a challenge. The project presented here takes all this and much more into account, such as the use of a space in the city itself, without it having to forgo any of its characteristics, while its encroachment somehow contributes to making it visible.