

Exhibition: Alberto Bañuelos. *The Liturgy of Stones*
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
30 September 2009 – 10 January 2010

Organized by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curator: Rafael Sierra

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This exhibition, sponsored by the Council of Castile and León's Culture Council, is the first retrospective that a museum has devoted to the work of Alberto Bañuelos. The main focus is on works of stone, marble, granite or alabaster made in the last few decades.

The show features over thirty works belonging to the various series into which his sculptures are divided, especially pieces from the series *Quillas* (Keels), with its highly stylized, sensual works in search of metaphysical essence, *Del espacio* (Of Space), a sculptural approach to the melodic development of form, *Abrir - Cerrar* (Open – Close), vertically placed stones that totemically connect the heavens and the earth, *Paisajes* (Landscapes), epidermal treatments of sea and earth, and various *Torsos* which represent the transition between different series.

The artist has made the installation *Homenaje a Robert Smithson* (Homage to Robert Smithson), consisting of 22 cut alabaster rocks, especially for this exhibition at the IVAM.

The exhibition catalogue includes essays by Carlos Marzal, Francisco J. R. Chaparro and Rafael Sierra, the curator of the exhibition. It also includes an interview between the artist and Arturo Arnalte and a biography prepared by Emma Rodríguez.

Alberto Bañuelos (Burgos, 1949) studied in the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology at Madrid's Complutense University. He combined his lectures with five hours of drawing in private schools, where he learnt classical techniques. In 1978 he set up his own studio, where he devoted himself to painting, advancing from figurative work to the most absolute abstraction. During this period he superimposed the landscape of La Alpujarra on that of Madrid and he spent a year portraying people in the area. In 1982 he made his first sculpture and definitively gave up painting. In his early sculptures he explored human torsos, which appear in all stages of his career, and sculpture tables, finally opting for abstraction, as he had already done in painting. As he himself has said, *"Really, as happened with Julio González, I need to set out from the figurative to evolve gradually towards the abstract."*

Between 1983 and 1985 he made repeated journeys to Carrara, where he learnt to work with marble. During this period he also travelled to Brazil, to Washington – where he discovered Lucian Freud – and to New York, where he met Noguchi shortly before he died. Among his influences he also mentions Richard Serra and Medardo Rosso.

In 1984 he presented his first exhibition, at the now defunct Galería 24 in Madrid, with paintings of La Alpujarra, gouaches and his first figurative sculptures. His *Paisajes* (Landscapes) made of stone and wood appeared in 1988, together with another of his best-known and most original series, *Quillas* (Keels). They were followed, in the 1990s, by his series of *Maternidades* (Motherhoods), *Máscaras* (Masks) and *Lunas* (Moons). After experimenting with iron, he returned to stone, of which he says, *"There is a desire for eternity in it and at the same time there is a primitivism that fascinates me."*

His career underwent a decisive change in 2003 when he started on the series *Deconstrucciones* (Deconstructions), producing a new language that resulted from making cuts in stones. He uses naturally weathered stones and splits them, tilts them, shifts them about and puts them together again. The stones are cut, and underneath there are other forms and other colours.

Alberto Bañuelos's work has been exhibited in Spanish galleries such as Raquel Ponce (Madrid) and in institutions such as the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Ateneo in Yucatan and the Spanish Embassy in Mexico.