

Exhibition: **Paco Caparrós. Photographic Hierographs**
Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
17 October 2006 – 7 January 2007

Organized by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curator: José Gandia Casimiro

The exhibition *Paco Caparrós. Photographic Hierographs* presents 48 digital colour photographs and a video installation about New York City. It seeks to redraw the urban landscape, anaesthetize graphics and construct a new, transformed reality by metamorphosing its content into a gesture of writing and light. This generates a new image which, like a hieroglyph, deciphers an unsettling new poetic environment.

Among the theoretical approaches that have shaped modern art, design has been considered one of the fields that has most effectively presented the innovative nature and contributions of the most avant-garde trends and movements to a broader public. Since the early twentieth century, graphic design has been one of the cultural instruments with greatest penetrative power because of its great impact on social communication.

The most decisive point in graphic design in Valencia was in the mid seventies, when there was a plunge into contemporaneity and the regaining of a mentality open to the world outside.

The catalogue published in connection with the exhibition contains illustrations of the works shown and also includes essays by Consuelo Císcar Casabán, José Gandia Casimiro, Román de la Calle, Fernando Castro Flórez and Raquel Gutiérrez.

In the course of his long career Paco Caparrós has become a landmark in Valencian design, because of his individual creative work and the ability of his organization, Caparrós Comunicación, to gather a wide-ranging team of prestigious professionals in the fields of graphic and industrial design, publishing and industrial and advertising photography and use technological advances for the benefit of communication in its broadest sense.

Paco Caparrós's training has followed two different paths which have tended to form a synthesis: on the one hand, his studies at the Schools of Fine Arts in Madrid (San

Fernando) and Valencia (San Carlos); on the other, the practice and study of photography, its techniques and poetics, and his work in the Techniart studio, devoted to industrial and advertising photography.

Caparrós embarked on his business activity in 1977. In 1986 he moved to the Fuente del Jarro industrial estate in Paterna, and in 1994 he moved again, to a 2,500 square metre site with the most advanced technological equipment. Paco Caparrós's creative career as a photographer has taken shape in the following series: *Personas, paisajes, bodegón experimental* (People, Landscapes, Experimental Still Life, 1967), *El movimiento y la luz* (Movement and Light, 1973), *Mensajes cifrados* (Coded Messages, 1975), *Desde el cielo* (From the Sky, 1976), *Los cuentos del agua* (Tales of Water, 1979), *Naturalezas vivas* (Living Natures, 1980), *Interiores de paisaje* (Landscape Interiors, 1981), *Casi silencio* (Almost Silence, 1990), *Invasión clip* (Invasion Clip, 1995), *Good Morning America* (1989) and *Nueva York mirada perdida* (New York, Lost Gaze, 1990). These last two exhibitions find a continuation, and perhaps their quintessence, in *Jerográficos fotográficos* (Photographic Hierographs, 2005–06), which is presented now at the IVAM.

The exhibition consists of a series of large-format photographs, together with a video creation and sound installation, offering a roving view of the city of New York as the central theme. Paco Caparrós states his aims in the following terms: "The excess of information in large cities generates mental and spiritual dispersion, unconsciously conditioning the eye in excessive attentiveness to the flow of ceaseless visual impacts, which seek to capture the attention and fix the message in the collective unconscious."

In *Photographic Hierographs* the photographer performs a process of self-questioning that focuses on design and photography, on seeing images of a great metropolis, its being-in-the-landscape, its visual absences and escapes, and on the role that they play in art today. The exhibition is pervaded by a restless, flowing line which coils and uncoils in endless spirals, an agitated line, as in the folds of drapery in German gothic art.

In this exhibition, presented with autobiographical traces that are apparently erased, Caparrós introduces an aesthetic, emotional dimension with a good many touches of wandering Romanticism. In his frequent visits to New York he seems to have been repeatedly affected by a chronic Stendhal syndrome. The peculiar fascination of the images of the city and the kinetic flows of the metropolis convey Caparrós to a state of passion and vertigo, and even hallucinations, such as Marie-Henri Beyle experienced on seeing Florence in 1817. Apart from the scientific components of the Stendhal syndrome described by the Italian psychiatrist Graziella Magherini, in Caparrós it also involves a Romantic reaction, without going so far as the heart-stopping excesses which took place in a museum setting in Darío Argento's horror film.