

Exhibition: **Joan Castejón y El Quijote**
IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
23 November 2005-15 January 2006

Organised by: **Institut Valencià d'Art Modern**

Curator: Fernando Castro Flórez.

Sponsored by:



The exhibition *Joan Castejón y El Quijote*, which comprises 32 drawings in all, is the result of Joan Castejón's plastic interpretation of *Don Quixote*, although it is by no means an illustration of Cervantes' book, but the painter has used his artist's imagination, his life experience, his coherence as an attentive reader, his ideological conscience and all his technical means and artistic knowledge to seek the utopian excellence of *equivalence*. Since the essential aim of his *reading* was always to *invent* his own Don Quixote, Castejón's amazing task can be considered one of the points of artistic culmination of all his work.

The catalogue of the exhibition reproduces the works shown and contains texts by Fernando Castro, Juan José Armas Marcelo,

Raquel Gutiérrez, Consuelo Císcar and an interview with the artist by Mar Menéndez.

Joan Castejón (Elche, Alicante, 1945) was an unofficial student at San Carlos fine arts school in Valencia. In 1969, out of prison, where he had been confined for political reasons, he was one of the founding members of the Grup d'Elx with artists like Sixto, Alberto Agulló, and Coll. A large part of his work was associated with the world of literature from the outset, particularly after the series he made in the nineteen seventies on another of the great novels of universal literature, *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Gabriel García Márquez. This was followed by tributes to poets and writers like García Lorca, Galdós, Miguel Hernández, Antonio Machado, Ausias March, Walt Whitman, Juan Carlos Onetti, Kavafis... most of whom are authors whose outstanding characteristics include swimming against the current, being misunderstood in their day, anachronic and even imbued with romantic idealism.

The backbone of his extensive work is his drawing, the basis of his painting, from his anatomy studies to his portraits, from the precise flesh to the abundant skulls and bones in his powerful *vanitas*. From his representation of man in movement to his fascination with horses, his gaze goes beyond what he represents to reach the sphere of the symbolic. Man is the referent in all his works, “although he is not concerned,” says Román de la Calle, “with atemporal and ahistorical man, but obsessed with the dehumanised situation in which, due to material progress, concrete man finds himself involved through the actions or omissions of real power”.

In Castejón's work the figurative is constantly present, establishing a meditation about man's corporality and space. His anthropomorphic figures have an almost symbolic character, which he turns into tributes and dialogues with the work of artists like Goya or Picasso. In his painting he uses the chiaroscuro with a colour scheme of sombre tints and abundant siennas, sepias, ochres, the shades of earth and bone, burnt wood and symbolic stumping, like metaphors of a world corroded by the acids of history.

As regards the *literary* tone that is often used when speaking Joan Castejón's work, Vargas Llosa says that painting today "without giving up at all its own purposes or abandoning modernity, can have literature as its starting point". He shows great *virtuosity* at all times, sedimenting on the representative surface that *hand* that obeys the shrewdness of intelligence with perfect precision. "It is probable," writes J.J. Armas Marcelo, "that in Castejón's innermost soul, in the draughtsman, in the artist, in the painter, resides that gaze of wonderment, dubious and full of mistrust at the evidence that it is, nearly always, the mask of appearance." There is something of historical painting in this work, endowed with great seriousness and nonetheless open to the anecdotic, to the "circumstances", to use a term of Ortega's.

Joan Castejón's fascination with literature led him to approach *Don Quixote* before, and now he has returned to it with admiration in this "commemorative" year. His faithfulness, realistic and visionary at the same time, to the text turns his work into an exercise that surpasses virtuosity and enters the dimension of a tribute.