

Exhibition: **Vicente Colom**

IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
10th July – 7th September 2008

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

Curated by: **Barbara Rose**

Sponsored by:



Grupo
Juan Bautista Soler

The exhibition of Vicente Colom sponsored by RuralCaja comprises 98 recent pen and ink drawings on paper (2007-2008). Vicente Colom, whose major theme since the mid eighties had been urban architecture, has now returned to the Mediterranean landscape, paying special attention to the details of its vegetation. In his landscapes the light Colom prefers to use is that of evening rather than that of midday, that of cloudy days rather than that of bright sunny days, at which time contrasts and chiaroscuro can be best observed in nature.

For the exhibition a catalogue has been brought out, sponsored by Juan Bautista Soler, illustrated with the reproductions of all the work displayed and containing a chronological biography of Vicente Colom and texts about the artist by Barbara Rose and Consuelo Císcar.

Vicente Colom was born in Valencia in 1941 and at the early age of fourteen began to work at the printing company founded by Luis Farinetti in 1887, where, under the supervision of Ernest Furió, embossed paper was produced by using steel plates hand-engraved with a burin. This work, which he carried out for over ten years, aroused his interest in engraver-painters like Rembrandt, Goya and Dürer, whose influence he admits has left traces in his

art. At the same time, he studied at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Carlos until 1965, the year he moved to Paris, where he lived for three years, until he returned to Spain after the revolutionary events of May 1968. In that city he made a living by teaching yoga at the Indian Culture Centre and working as an engraver. It was in Paris that he began to use pen and ink drawing almost exclusively. His many visits to the Musée Guimet, Musée National des Arts Asiatiques, whose collections contain important samples of traditional Chinese painting, reinforced his aim of achieving the greatest possible quality and volume by means of using black and white, chiaroscuro and drawing.

In 1969 he met Federico Roble, director of Galería Fortuny in Madrid, who introduced him into the art circle of those years. A year before he arrived, the exhibition *Antes del Arte* (Before Art) had been held at Galería Eurocasa in Madrid and later at Galería As in Barcelona; the objective of this exhibition, according to the theoretician of the group, Vicente Aguilera Cerni, was “to tread the path that leads from science to art”. Similar experiments were made in the same line of research, such as those organised by the Calculus Centre of Madrid University and, on the other hand, the heterogeneous character of the Nueva Generación against the poetics of Informalismo, which Juan Antonio Aguirre spoke about in his book *Arte último*, published in 1969.

After spending two years in Asturias, in 1972 he settled in Madrid, where he shared a studio with Vicente Peris until 1974. That same year he met in Munich Pamela Shuts, an American dancer with whom he lived for seven years and to whom he owes his series about movement and the human figure: buskers playing their instruments, violinists at work, popular topics and especially themes related with dancing. In 1975 he befriended Raúl Chavarri, who supported and oriented his artistic career. In the late seventies and early eighties, Colom combined Expressionist-style oil and wax painting –nudes and landscapes– with pen and ink drawing. The latter style took over from then on, and was characterised by an accumulation of outlines and masses in certain areas of the paper while other zones were occupied by a vacuum. Scarecrows, melancholic trousers and jackets, deck chairs and harlequins were his favourite themes. The objects seemed to be floating in a desolate, non-existent atmosphere, conveying disquietude and turmoil as a clear symptom of the traditional social condition of Spain at that time. Chavarri defined it as an “oasis of magic or fantastic realism” in the style of Franz Roh, as an “arouser of images capable of conjuring the unreal, the unimaginable, and of heralding thought and emotions beyond the limits of the mind”.

Vicente Colom always remained independent both of realistic-type trends of portraying ordinary things and the hyperrealism imported from Great Britain and the United States; nor was he allured by Pop art and socio-political criticism. Without a doubt, conserving his independence is one of the reasons that has led Colom to combine his career as an artist with his work as a decorator and antique dealer. For him decoration is a collage, an interplay of combination and eclectic combinations, while drawing leads him to controlled and reasoned creation. Colom draws from life; his medium is the pen.

Colom becomes carried away by detail and the finish of the drawing “because realism allows him to speculate about the poetic side of things”. He tends to go back to his themes over and over again after a long break, because for him his series are different ways of seeing and observing the same object or sequence. In his variations contrast and chiaroscuro are more clearly seen in nature, and the pen allows him to establish tonal degrees and gradations by means of a network of lines and continual uniform traces rhythmically applied. But his landscapes are not altogether real: the elements that shape them have been alienated and isolated by means of details. As Román de la Calle says, Colom “...simulates and constructs –from familiar and everyday images– a whole imaginary universe, in the double sense of a universe made up of images and a universe fashioned by the flight of the imagination”.