

Exhibition: **JOSÉ SANLEÓN. Retrospective. 1997-2006**
18th January through 25th February 2007

Organised by: Institut Valencia d'Art Modern IVAM

Curated by: Fernando Castro

Sponsored by:



C O R T E S V A L E N C I A N E S

The retrospective exhibition the IVAM has organized of the work of the artist Sanleón overviews the evolution of his artistic trajectory through 107 works, with a special focus on his latest series, *Al-Boeira*. Coinciding with the exhibition, the IVAM has published an illustrated catalogue with reproductions from the series on exhibit and contains texts by Consuelo Císcar, Donald Kuspit, and Lyle Rexer, and by the exhibition curator Fernando Castro.

José Sanleón (Catarroja, 1953) belongs to the generation of artists that contributed decisively to overhauling the visual arts in Spain in the 1980s. In point of fact, the IVAM organised an exhibition of the work of this artist in its Centre del Carme venue between 1993 and 1994, focusing primarily on a body of work inspired by cities like Rome or New York. The exhibition now being presented at the IVAM overviews the period spanning from 1997 to 2006. With one hundred plus works, this show underscores his new visual and thematic explorations throughout the decade and very especially his seminal *Al-Boeira* series.

With a work grounded in complex influences where the posits of American abstract expressionism dovetail neatly with a telling usage of the conceptual and material formulations of Arte Povera, Sanleón has undertaken a critical reinterpretation of the cityscape, the metaphor of the labyrinth, a tribute to the

great masters and, perhaps more pointedly, the conception of painting as a language in continuous mutation and expansion.

While a creative dialogue with the natural landscape has underpinned his work since his first tentative steps as an artist, it is only in the last two years when he turned his gaze to the real landscape of La Albufera. This fresh water lagoon near the city of Valencia is freighted with memories, symbolic references and redolent backward nods to experiences from his childhood. Al-boeira, the Arab name of this lake, is the title arching over a vast body of work that, to borrow the artist's own words, "responds to an inner drive to reinsert myself in nature, both iconographically and as a rejoinder to the various emotional states of the soul. I am not after an objective narration of a certain image. What concerns me is how to turn this introspection through memory into a painted lived experience. The ulterior motivation of these works is the quest for ideas that help me paint the very essence of painting, in other words, painting in itself."