

NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

RAFA MACARRÓN

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Rafa Macarrón (b. 1981, Spain; lives and works in Madrid) is a self-taught artist whose works meld playful drawing and figuration with striking, chromatic abstraction. Macarrón's work plays with bodies, particularly ones with manifold fingers, thin-lined limbs, and hyper-distorted facial features. Trained as a physiotherapist, he works with a comprehensive understanding of anatomy, only to rebuke its precision. His canvases comprise a field of playfulness, a space for mutation. Macarrón's corruptions of scientific anatomy are at once spirited and macabre, similar to the figures in Picasso's *Guernica*. His dreamlike aesthetic brings a popular-cultural sensibility--one informed by various media such as comics and cartoons--to a style of abstract figuration exemplified by painters such as Paul Klee, Arshile Gorky, and Jean Dubuffet. These characters exist in two types of landscapes: in some works, Macarrón emphasizes a sense of isolation, positioning the figures in textured color fields; and in other works, he makes them bustle in overcrowded worlds filled with absurdist infrastructures.

Macarrón has exhibited at Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles; CAC, Málaga, España; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Alicante, Spain; and Museo DA2, Salamanca, Spain. His work is collected by institutions worldwide, including the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, New York; Fundación BMW, Spain; Caja Campo, Valladolid, Spain; and Colección Mercadona, Spain, among others.

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SELECTED WORKS

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled, 2023
Mixed media on linen
89 x 144 1/8 x 1 5/8 in
226 x 366 x 4 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Lino 6), 2021
Mixed media on linen
72 x 72 inches
182.9 x 182.9 cms

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Dibujo 1), 2021
Mixed media on paper
13 3/4 x 19 3/4 in
35 x 50 cm

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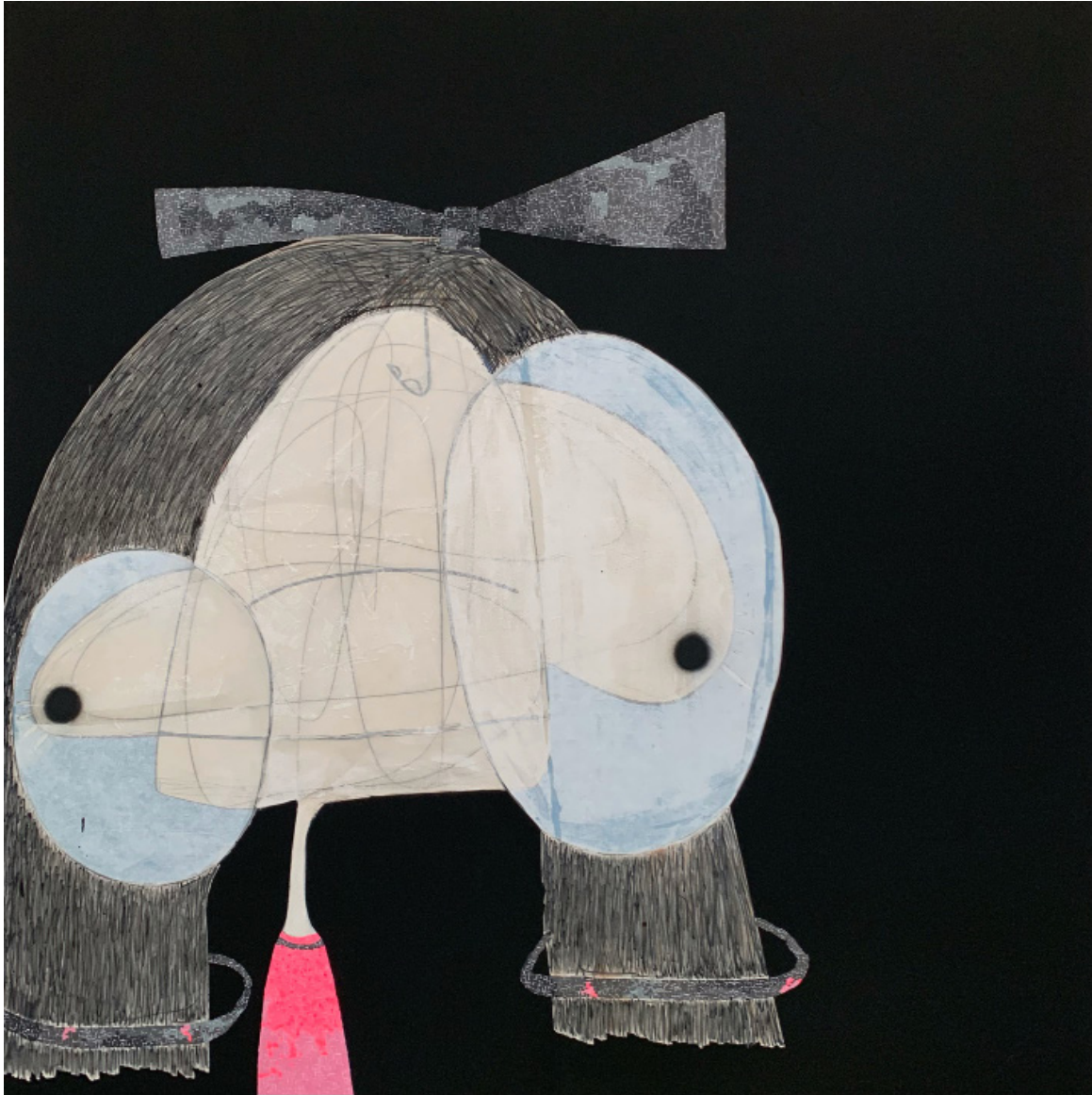
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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Niña 5), 2021
Mixed media on canvas
55 1/8 x 55 1/8 in
140 x 140 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Niña 2), 2021
Mixed media on canvas
89 x 89 in
226 x 226 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Niña 3), 2021
Mixed media on canvas
55 1/8 x 72 1/8 in
140 x 183 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Niña 4), 2021
Mixed media on canvas
55 1/8 x 55 1/8 in
140 x 140 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Untitled (Niñas), 2021
Mixed media passepartout
Suite of 50 drawings
57 3/8 x 92 3/4 in
145.7 x 235.6 cm

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Rafa Macarrón
Perro IV, 2021
Bronze, edition of 3
26 3/4 x 144 1/2 x 37 3/4 in
68 x 367 x 96 cm

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INSTALLATION VIEWS

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Installation view of Rafa Macarrón's
The Girls
(January 15 - February 11 2022)
Nino Mier Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Rafa Macarrón's
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Installation view of Rafa Macarrón's
The Girls' Dreams
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PRESS

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October 2021

Artist Interview: Rafa Macarrón

By Rom Levy



Spanish artist Rafa Macarrón is a young self-taught artist. His work leaves a touch of dreamlike influences and childish reminiscences. Despite the drama and deformity in his characters, the scenes portray tenderness, kindness, and harmony.

I recently caught up with the talented Rafa Macarrón and talked about his artistic influences, inspirations, and plans for 2022.

Rom Levy: To begin, can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?

Rafa Macarrón: From a very young age I have had a pencil in my hands. When I was 4 years old, I traveled with my parents to Paris coinciding with the inauguration of the Picasso Museum. When I entered one of the rooms I asked for a notebook and colored pencils. I spent the whole morning trying to understand what was in front of me. At the age of seven I used to make drawings full of color, animals or people taken out from some unknown world. By the time I was supposed to go to college, it was the Spanish painter Juan Barjola who encouraged me not to apply to the Academy of Fine Arts.

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My studies as a physiotherapist have helped me a lot to know the human anatomy. I know the structure of the body perfectly. Afterwards, I started trying deformations and saw that they worked very well. It's a bit like creating your own body characters, each with their own soul.

Cycling has also provided me, not only with the desire to go beyond, but also the solitude, freedom, and also many landscapes, which have influenced my painting so much. When I used to ride a bike, I entered the same state of flow that I reach when I paint. I could be painting for eight or ten hours nonstop and not realize the passage of time.

Who and what inspires your work?

A small sunrise, the time I spend with my children, a walk with the dogs... To look at the small, ordinary, and daily details. It is very important to me and for my practice, to feel, perceive and keep painting to learn how to create new work. Those are the little things that inspire me.

Who are the characters in your paintings?

The characters come out of my everyday life and I take them out of context. They could be individuals living with us. When I create them, I always like to imagine where they come from, what they do, where they go, what life they have...

It is clear to me that I want to speak about life on the street, the everyday life, and my own existence. And I want to speak about these things with humor, more white than dark humor, more compassionate than cruel.

I also like that the characters relate to the viewer, and I play with the formats and scales. I go from a large portrait, where the contact with the figure is direct, to panoramas in which dozens of characters seem to be starring in multiple scenes simultaneously.

Although your subject engages in daily human activities and has human resemblance, they have a more cartoonish quality. What do you aim to deliver through that, and do your subjects stand as separate entities from ordinary people?

My characters don't go towards the caricature. I flee away from all kinds of cartoonish ornamentation. They are born from a fantastic, surreal, and expressionist figuration. I consider them hybrid characters that are closely related to my admiration for Dubuffet, Bonifacio, and Alfonso Fraile. My characters live in a transcended daily life, clean days, sunsets, and fresh air.

What can you tell us about the flat characteristics of your work?

I have always liked to transgress reality and invent like-cosmic spaces that relate to the characters. With flat backgrounds I manage to enhance the figure, and thus give more prominence to the character. When it comes to making more worked backgrounds, as it happens with the beach-scene paintings, illusions of perspectives are

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generated, it happens the other way around as in with the flat background paintings. I create the background and then I place the figure. I use the extremities of the figures, textures, or background elements to break with the flatness and generate volumes, textures, and a sense of perspective. Colors also help me create atmospheres, like when I use magentas to generate warmth.

The materials used in my painting give me total freedom of expression. The spray gives modernity, dynamism, and color. The pencils and the marker create the weft, the waxes, the acrylics and the gouaches, nuanced transparencies and the oil brings complexity.

When I saw the oeuvre you exhibited in your first solo show at CAC, the first artist that came to my mind looking at the paintings was Picasso and when I saw the sculptures, the first artist I thought of was Salvador Dali. Do they influence your work? How do cubism and surrealism come together with expressionism in your art?

Picasso of course. I admire Picasso's work much more than Dalí's, for me he is the painter par excellence, but it is true that the sculptures can be a little like Dalí's work because of my interpretation of the shapes of dogs. But my painting has expressionist features for the immediacy, the stroke is direct, even though I do a lot of sketch work and previous study.

Following up on my last question, how does your work relate to art movements?

I have had a very direct relationship with the Spanish painting, I have practically grown up in the Prado Museum, the best art gallery in the world. I am very proud to be part of Spanish painting tradition. Goya's black paintings have always moved me, and of course Las Meninas by Velázquez, which I consider the best work.

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My parents are both architects, and I feel that architecture has a very important relationship with my work. I have traveled a lot to see art and have visited fairs and museums around the world. I think everything I see influences me in some way. But if I have to mention specific movements, I would mention El Paso Group in Madrid, the New Figuration or the American Abstract Expressionism as movements that have been able to influence me.

I look at your work, and for a moment, I am dwelling in the ordinary moments in life, in a peaceful sense. What do you aim to deliver to the viewer?

I invite the viewer to look at things differently as I've mentioned it above. I'd like the viewer to relate to my interpretation of reality and what surrounds us. I hope they experience my painting and its characters the same way I do, asking themselves: who are they? What is their life like? Where do they come from and, where do they go?

I am interested in the ephemerality of paintings, do you view your own work as precious? If you are unhappy with a work, do you tend to destroy it or would you rather put it in storage for a while and alter them at a later date?

No, if something doesn't convince me, I destroy it. I don't like to look back, I'm not capable.

How does being a self-taught artist affect your style? Do you think it is liberating, or was it ever constraining?

It's always liberating.

Did you ever paint a mural or have any interest to do so in the future?

I've never been interested, really.

What's next for you in 2022?

The truth is that I am very excited because many interesting things are coming up in 2022. I'm going to have a show in Los Angeles with Nino Mier gallery, I will participate in Arco Madrid and many other projects that I still cannot talk about, but that I find very exciting..

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OCULA

October 2021

Jadé Fadojutimi, Shara Hughes, and Rafa Macarrón Shine at Sotheby's Hong Kong Sales

By Sam Gaskin



Rafa Macarrón, *Rutina Fluor* (2019). Mixed media on canvas. 226.2 by 294 cm. Courtesy Sotheby's.

Auction cash cows Jean-Michel Basquiat and Zao Wou-ki underperformed as collectors chased up-and-coming young artists.

Fifteen artists set records at Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary Art Sales in Hong Kong, which saw HK \$887m (US \$114m) of Western art sold over the weekend.

Works by several young artists eclipsed their high estimates more than three times over.

Jadé Fadojutimi's *Under the Weather* (2017) sold for HK \$6.2m (US \$799,600). The 28-year-old British painter is the youngest artist to have a work in the Tate Collection.

Other artists who set records include Loie Hollowell, Peter McDonald, Nicolas Party and Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai, whose NFT derived from the movie *In the Mood for Love* (2000) sold for HK \$4.3 million (US \$552,700).

'We set out to put together a sale that simply speaks to what our clients across Asia are looking for,' said Max Moore, head of contemporary art sales at Sotheby's Asia. 'In our case, this means important pieces by

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storied contemporary masters, as well as buzzy young artists who have recently started taking art fairs, or indeed Instagram, by storm.'

The 'buzzy young artists' significantly outperformed contemporary and modern masters at Sotheby's Hong Kong auctions this time around.

Jean-Michel Basquiat's Untitled (Red Warrior) (1982) fetched HK \$162.9m (US \$20.9m), the greatest sum of any work sold over the weekend, but that was towards the low end of Sotheby's estimated range of HK\$150-200m.

Pablo Picasso's Femme Accroupie (1954) sold for HK \$191.7m (US\$24.6m), a record for Picasso at auction in Asia, but smack in the middle of Sotheby's estimates, while Vincent Van Gogh's Nature Morte: Vase Aux Glaïeuls (1886), realised HK \$71m (US \$9.1m), just inside the low estimate.

Three of five works by Chinese painter Zao Wou-ki, who regularly sells for outlandish amounts at auction, were passed in, and Sanyu's oil on masonite portrait Nu endormi (1950s) sold for HK \$80.2m, barely over half the high estimate.

Nevertheless, works by Joan Mitchell, Roy Lichtenstein, and Cecily Brown managed to beat Sotheby's top estimates.

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whitewall

July 2021

Rafa Macarron Explores Shape-Shifting Characters at La Nave

By Melissa Mui



Installation view of "El bañista / The Bather," 2021, courtesy to La Nave.

La Nave Salinas Foundation in Ibiza is currently presenting "El bañista / The Bather" with Rafa Macarrón. It is the Madrid-born artist's first solo exhibition, on view through July 10 to October 31.

The exhibition features more than 15 paintings of various compositions by Macarrón. His works explore shape-shifting characters that are full of humility. He creates large-scale, vertical pieces along with bright, horizontal panoramic landscapes that have darker paint palettes. In the latter, Macarrón presents thousands of individual scenes that happen simultaneously within one painting. There is a dominant presence of juxtapositions in all his paintings as the artist explores tensions between overcrowded spaces and solitary figures, and with saturated and monochromatic colors.

"It is expressionism because it is born from a gesture, but also a new figuration. To create my elongated figures requires knowledge and respect for anatomy. I know the structure of the body perfectly. Then, I begin to try out distortions and deformations, which I think works very well. I am able to create my own characters, each with their own soul and personality," said Macarrón when defining his work.

Macarrón is the first Spanish artist to exhibit at La Nave Salinas Foundation in Ibiza, as he follows KAWS, Keith Haring, and Kenny Scharf.

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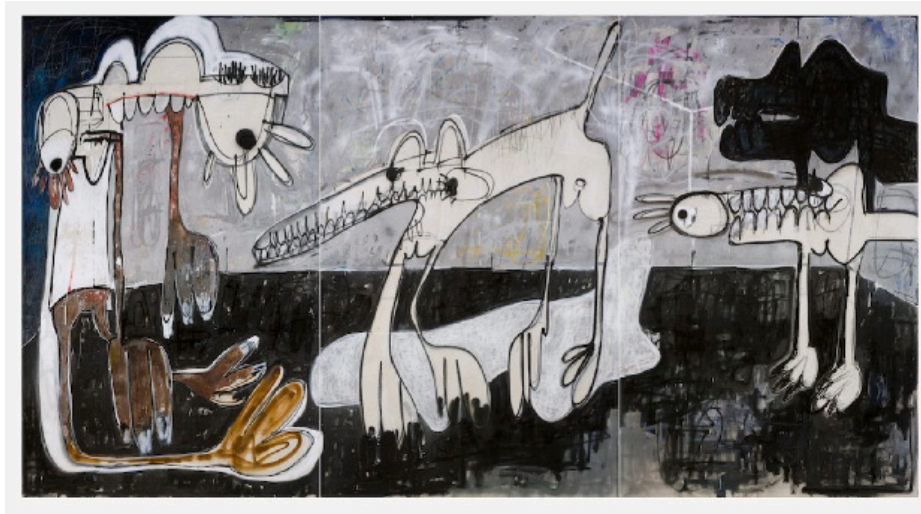
JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

June 2021

Review: Rafa Macarrón's "Fifteen" @CAC Malaga

By Sasha Bogojev



Between March 26th and June 6th, the Contemporary Art Center of Malaga presented Fifteen, a milestone exhibition by Rafa Macarrón curated by Fernando Frances. Featuring fifteen works made especially for this presentation, including ten canvases, four large-format bronze sculptures, and a polyptych made up of fifty drawings, the works are titled numerically in an effort to leave out any suggestions about their narratives.

As a self-taught artist, ex-cyclist, and physiotherapist by training, Macarrón's artistic practice has been strongly informed by popular culture influences, namely comics, as well as Spanish painting of the 50s and 60s. Blithe about the customary approaches and the "rules" imposed by the tradition, over the years he developed a playful work that represents everyday situations taken out of context and altered by the deformity of the characters. Comfortable with the knowledge about the human body through his studies in physiotherapy, the Madrid-born artist is often reducing his subjects to abstracted forms creating highly welcoming and intriguing scenes. Although known for his colorful, vibrant visuals, the body of work created for this presentation was created exclusively in a monochrome scale.

"I wanted the exhibition to be a project by itself, and a tribute to Las Pinturas Negras de Goya, Saura, Alfonso Fraile artworks, and also Dubuffet," the artist told Juxtapoz about this determined switch. "The space is diaphanous so I wanted all the works to be one. This led me to play with black and white colors and work without my detailed and meticulous painting." Along with the large scale, these two elements successfully accentuate the emotional weight behind the work. "I had to change the scale to make this exhibition. I did not want the space to

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affect my work, that's why I opted for the large scale and that's been a challenge. I tried to go to the immensity of the room and thus the balance with my works," the artist explained.

This shift informed a different, more expressive mark-making as well as the use of larger painting tools, which led to powerful visuals in which his customary singular thin lines were replaced with more expressive and repetitive linework. "There was a moment when I liked my sketches and my drawings more than my artworks on canvas, so I started to draw on the canvas," Macarron told us about the differences in his approach. This allowed for simpler, more subject- focused compositions, which also added to the overall impact of these monumental pieces. "I look at my previous work and they have more details and are very meticulous. Moving the drawing itself to the canvas is where I feel more comfortable now," the artist summarized. In addition to that, he is frequently experimenting with materials on top of acrylics, oils, pencils, or sprays, allowing each individual choice to speak for itself - linen to express warmth, aluminum or PVC to show coldness, and paper that allows him to show the most graphic parts. "Go back to colors? I don't know, it would depend on the project I am working on," Macarron concludes, clearly fascinated by the weight and impact of the newly developed aesthetic.

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HYPEBEAST

August 2019

Rafa Macarron's Dream-Like Characters to Take Over NYC's Allouche Gallery

By Gabrielle Leung



Spanish artist Rafa Macarron will hold a solo exhibition at Allouche Gallery titled "Fluorescent Routine." His unique style of otherworldly, alienesque creatures set in a mix of 2D and 3D dream-like worlds will be on show beginning September 5.

Rafa Macarron explores the adventure and greatness of ordinary life, elevating everyday activities with mysticism and provocation. One creature blow dries and combs its hair, while another smokes a cigarette. One cooks food while a group of friends meet together. Seemingly ordinary activities are distorted with outlandish figures sporting hands with too many fingers, eyes that pop out of the creatures' heads and legs that cannot hold up the weight of their bodies.

The objects, scenes and architecture are familiar to viewers, but when placed together, create a new universe in which the spectator must now look inward to explore his/her self.

Macarron's colorful characters, reminiscent of childhood doodles, allow the works to project a playful, limitless view of the world that has not yet been dictated by boundaries.

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Carolina Verd

November 2018

The Universe and the Microworlds of Rafa Macarrón

By Carolina Verd



This week I've been talking about art with Rafa Macarrón. We met in his Madrid studio, a space of incredible vistas of the vast Pardo hill. When you enter the room through his painting-door, you go into a different world, a balanced world in which everything seems to be exactly where it needs to be: an isolation tank invaded by an explosion of vibrant colors, galaxies of acrylic boats, markers, oil paint tubes, models, beads, pieces, buttons, and fibers that cohabitate in a floor made of living stains.

The Power of Being Amazed by Small Things

In the work of Macarrón everything flows in an intuitive dominion of space and composition.

Colors are mixed with spontaneity; one color latches onto one another in a harmonious dialogue of daring combinations. The characters in his painting awaken our curiosity: where do they come from and where are they going? You feel like hugging them, they are like Rafa: with big glasses, tender, intuitive, calm, intelligent, soft, spiritual, fun, and colorful.

The microworlds in the paintings of Rafa Macarrón can be perceived as a state in which the rules of equilibrium and order of the universe reign supreme.

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Rafa, One of the Spanish Artists with the Greatest International Projection

The world from which he comes from and lives in is the world of art and culture. Manuel Hernández Mompó, El Paso group, Alfonso Fraile, Manolo Millares, and Francisco Iturrino are the artists he looks up to the most. From the Paris school he learned about color, elegance, and warmth in works of art. Confessions, by Saint Augustine, and The Lily of the Field and the Bird of Air, by Søren Kierkegaard are mandatory readings; these books have left the biggest mark upon him, and have helped him in the path of inner connection and reflection he's undertaken in his work.

About Spirituality in his Art

Rafa talks to us about his spiritual world: he reads mystic literature, philosophy, and poetry. The path of detachment to reach the maximum freedom is the one that taught him to listen to the painting during the creation process in a direct and clear way. His spontaneous, balanced, and carefree work reflects the fact that Rafa is an artist with spiritual longings. Without sketches, straight into the canvas, Macarrón paints from an intuitive and connected space, that can only be reached with discipline, work, and —at the same time— by letting go, flowing.

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CV

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RAFA MACARRÓN

Born 1982 in Madrid, ES
Lives and works in Madrid, ES

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US (forthcoming)
Lio Malca, New York, NY, US (forthcoming)
- 2022 Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE
Untitled, Galerie 75 Faubourg, Paris, FR
The Girls, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
The Girls' dreams, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Afternoon Delight, CVG Foundation, Beijing, CN
- 2021 *El Bañista*, La Nave Salinas, Ibiza, ES
Quince, CAC, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, ES
- 2019 *Flourescent Routine*, Allouche Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2018 *Univero tropical*, Galería Juan Silió, Santander, ES
Turn off your mind, relax and float down stream, Gerhardt Braun, Palma de Mallorca, ES
- 2017 *Cuando un hombre entra en una habitación lleva toda su vida con él*, Galería Marga Cervera, Madrid, ES
- 2016 *The Lilies in the Field and the Birds of the Air*, Allouche Gallery, NY, US
La vida comienza donde termina el miedo, Gerhardt Braun, Palma de Mallorca, ES
- 2015 *En familia*, Galería Juan Silió, Santander, ES
- 2014 *Take off*, Galería O. Ascanio, Miami, FL, US
- 2013 *El reino de la fantasía no puede morir*, Galería Distrito 4, Madrid, ES
- 2011 *La Ciudad Acabada*, Galería Distrito 4, Madrid, ES
Busa Silencio y lo Encontrarás, Palacio de Garcigrande, Salamanca, ES
- 2010 *En las nubes*, Galería Adora Calvo, Salamanca, ES

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Stand Still – A Still Life Show*, Allouche Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2015 *Luz del Mediterráneo*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Alicante, ES

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- 2014 *Jóvenes pintores Fundación Gaceta*, Museo DA2, Salamanca, ES
- 2013 *Casa de las Bóvedas*, Universidad de Puebla, Puebla, MX
- 2011 *ARTENAVAS*, Convento de Santo Domingo y San Pablo, Ávila, ES
- 2010 *La memoria del laberinto Homenaje a Miguel Hernández*, Centro de Congresos, Elche, ES
- 2009 *Paisajes contemporáneos*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Elche, ES

AWARDS AND HONORS

- 2013 ARCO Best Artist
- 2010 Premio BMW de Pintura, First Place Award
Certamen de Pintura Jóvenes pintores Fundación Gaceta, First Place Award
- 2009 Certamen Internacional de Pintura Royal Premier Hoteles, First Place Award

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Cristina Masaveu Paterson, ES
- Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY, US
- Fundación BMW, ES
- Fundación Vivanco, LA Rioja, ES
- Caja Campo, Valladolid, ES
- Cooperativa Virgen de las Viñas, Tomelloso, ES
- Colección Pilar Citoler, ES
- Colección Mercadona, ES