

THE SILENT SHOUT. MILLARES ON PAPER

8 JUNE
15 SEPTEMBER
GALLERY 1

Curator:
María José Salazar



Untitled. 1968. Paint on paper. 36,5 x 44,5 cm. Elvireta Escobio Collection. © Manolo Millares. VEGAP, Santander, 2019

Manolo Millares was born in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in January 1926 and died prematurely in Madrid in August 1972. He belongs to a group of artists who grew up during the Civil War and came to age in the 1950's a rather obscure time in Spain. Together, they instigated a cultural movement and produced work that was critical of the state of the country. Millares was a transgressive, brilliant and committed artist, and an unquestionable ethical role model.

In his works on paper one can discern a thread that runs throughout his whole trajectory: evolving from sketches of family portraits with figurative images to surrealist or constructivist compositions, his style is

ultimately predicated on broken brushwork, with grand strokes, using graphite and watercolour as well as Indian ink, yet in essence remaining true to his painting.

This approach is an evident and powerful example of the third way opened in the arts in the mid-twentieth century. His drawing initiates a new form of expression, refusing to accept it as a mere adjunct to other disciplines in art. The change he brought about, in which he lends priority to the line and the gesture, was not just conceptual, as there is also an evident predominance of sentiment over mere appearance.

In all his work on paper, with the obvious exception of his early work prior to moving



Untitled. c.1956. Paint on paper. Elvireta Escobio Collection. © Manolo Millares. VEGAP, Santander, 2019

to mainland Spain in 1955, Manolo Millares underscores the spontaneity of the stroke, the primacy of mental processes and the expressive use of material.

The artist's evolution runs parallel with the gradual yet evident rupture with traditional methods. Now, drawing is liberated and admits the pre-eminence of colour, applied even with expressionist gestural brushwork. He depicts objects and landscapes, but without respecting their forms, and instead of likeness, he now places emphasis on poetry and musicality, expression and communication. Above all else, rather than depiction or representation, what truly matters are ideas and the mental process.

Millares' output is like a silent scream of protest, powerful and dramatic, expressive yet quiet, in which the gesture is to the fore, and communicative power takes precedence.

His life's work can be divided into four main phases: firstly, his **beginnings** and formative years (1945-1954), which encompasses a time of academic, naturalist drawings (1945-1948) which then gave way to a

process of expressionist research and experimentation (1948-1954), starting out from Surrealism and evolving towards Constructivism and Figuration, in which he created his *Pictografías*, a synthesis of his creative process; **secondly**, a period of consolidation and inventiveness in which his brushstroke is a vehicle to convey his life experiences (1955-1963); his **third phase (1964-1968)** is one of plenitude, protest and forcefulness in which his work finally reaches artistic maturity, and his works on paper open a new path in drawing in Spain; finally, his **fourth and last period (1969-1971)** in which, following a trip to the Sahara, he creates brighter and more poetic works yet without relinquishing one bit of their energy. His palette becomes brighter in colour and his gestures more softened, though not for that any less expressive, and without ever abandoning his rebelliousness. He combined the luminosity of the support itself with the harmony of the stroke and the use of calligraphy as a backdrop for compositions.

Millares died in Madrid in 1972 at the height of his creative maturity, leaving behind a formidable body of work.

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