

SALVADOR JUANPERE

IMAGE AND RESEMBLANCE

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 Museu de Montserrat

The background voice of sculpture

Salvador Juanpere's extensive career as a sculptor is marked by strong questions about the *raison d'être* of sculpture, which combines with a great respect for the daring sculptors who came before him, from whom he draws thoughts, shares ideas about what the origin of the shape would be and speculates with them, with philosophers and writers about the complexities of this craft. With the aim of playing down the supposed genius of artistic work, he has drawn up a conceptual map of everything that surrounds him and depicts an interesting world underlying the sculptural phenomenon, which ceases to be secondary to creating poetic images. Juanpere manages to give a sculptural category both to material and conceptual supports when dealing with them as representative subjects. Juanpere's work is a permanent praise of intellectual and processual duality, intrinsic to working in workshops.

This exhibition emphasizes the initiatory act, indefinable coming together, which has to do with the willingness to create and its inherent problems. In *De massa unde fuit plasmatus Adam (1238)* the artist reminds us that the most primitive way for any creator is the mould of his own hand. In *Et requievit die septimo*, created almost three decades ago, the religious mythology about how the world was created over six days with the seventh day being devoted to divine rest, is joined with each of the six elements (*quarks*, basic elements of all matter observed in particle accelerators). This parallelism suggests that the names given by the scientists could have marked, day by day, the script of the creation, in an attempt to make us notice the spiritual side of science.

The unprecedented installation made for this exhibition with fourteen stones from the

Montserrat mountain, *He who carves sculptures merely speeds up the breaking down of the mountains*, evokes words that Marguerite Yourcenar puts into the mouths of the Renaissance sculptor, Michelangelo. Juanpere's gaze on the mountain range of Montserrat could not remain alien to his frequent disquisitions about the double destructive-constructive condition of nature involved in the act of creation. The steel plaques with the explicit phrase are embedded within each stone; it seems that the mountain will be sawed in a curious metalinguistic game with the name *Mont-Serrat* and, above all, they appeal to the idea of putting in the first wedge and opening the stone to tackle the creative action.

The creative process itself leads to a permanent debate between desires and renunciations, challenges and failures, empathy and loneliness experienced by the artist. The work *Berufung* (which means "call" or "vocation", both religious and artistic), faithfully reproduces five times the stone that the well-known sculpture *David* by Bernini has in his hand. According to the Bible, he had five in a bag, to take on the giant who he defeated on his first attempt. These tiny pieces of marble, as Juanpere explains, "evoke an available supply of projectiles, within reach which are to be thrown". They symbolize the exemplary attitude of overcoming and the possibility of *hitting the target*, sometimes against all odds.

A double ontological awareness is always seen in Salvador Juanpere's work. On the one hand, referring to the physical subject. The country house in the Tarragona countryside where he creates his artistic work, at the foot of the imposing Mussara mountains, where he has family roots, has earned a special belief in the

telluric force of the earth, from which a tactile vein emanates linked to a strong intimation with the stones. A second ontological awareness connects him closely with the history of art. In *Robbery (God put beauty in the world so that it could be stolen)* inspired by Ortega and Gasset, Juanpere shifts the sense of the beauty of the ancient aesthetic canons to the new relationships with materials used by artists such as Penone, Tàpies, Cragg, Buren, Laib or Beuys. Each box contains a specific sculptural element along with its author's name, written in lower case to indicate what appears to be stolen, appropriated objects from each sculptor, are actually seeds that could have germinated in it. The sculptors with whom he shares an understanding, as the artist himself says, "provide the world with latent possibilities that wander like dust".

The interest in Caravaggio goes back to the beginnings of his artistic career, who he already paid tribute to in a 1977 painting. In this exhibition he has renewed this interest with a work referred to the painting *Penitent Saint Jerome* from the Montserrat Museum. Juanpere draws from the essential outline of the image

Salvador Juanpere

Vilaplana (Tarragona), 17 April 1953. He began as a sketch artist and painter in Reus, where he put on his first exhibition in 1976 at the Centre de Lectura. He studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Barcelona, where he completed his doctorate in 2003 and worked as a Professor of Sculpture for more than twenty years until 2018, while also teaching in the Escola Massana Art and Design Centre until 2005. He belongs to the generation of sculptors that burst onto the Catalan scene in the 1980s, adding something new to sculpture, first with materials directly taken from the natural environment as well as with synthetic materials (*Vestigis*, Espai 10, Fundació Miró, 1980) and, later, with wood, stone and cast iron evoking vegetal or fossil forms. In 1992 his public sculpture *Columna rostrata* was installed in Terrassa and *Nucli* in Reus in 1994. In 1996 he put on the individual exhibition *Paradigma+* at the Palau de la Virreina in Barcelona and in 2002 he won the XXXI Julio Antonio Sculpture Award at the Museum of Modern Art of Tarragona (MAMT),

from the Baroque darkness with a small drawing transferred to the middle of an unblemished white background which is the same size as the famous painting. At the bottom of the drawing, a sword emerging from a large block of marble carries the inscription *Nec Spe Nec Metu* ("without hope, without fear"), a motto by Isabella d'Este that Caravaggio made his own and which lends its name to the work. Juanpere looks at the small man behind the great figures of the past. From Saint Jerome, he emphasizes the wise hands that were battered by working in the sun, such as those of a farmer, and in both skulls as recipients of the life and death of ideas. He recovers a personal, more mundane tool from the great Baroque painter: the sword that Caravaggio used to defend himself in the many chance events of everyday life. According to Juanpere, the phrase inscribed on the blade of the sword "encourages facing difficulties, despite man only being a small atom in the universe".

Teresa Blanch

Exhibition curator

for the work *Teoria de...* In 2003 he installed the sculpture *Beyond* at the sculpture park in Gyeonggi (South Korea); in 2005, the sculpture *135 Vectors* in the Parliament of Edinburgh, and the same year won the Sculpture Prize awarded by Vila Casas Foundation. In 2008, he created the installation *Viatge global, viatge local, viatge personal* for the Roquetes train station as part of the *Barcelona Metro Public Art project*, and in 2011 he presented *Tributum* in the RAER in Rome. His works have taken on a strong conceptual tone and show an interest in the poetical metalanguage of sculpture and its instrumental and procedural reflection. Since 1980 he has created forty individual sculptures and has participated in a large number of collective projects. He has many works in public and private collections, such as the Art Triangle Collection in New York, the Suñol Foundation, the "la Caixa" Foundation, the Edinburgh Parliament, the Macba, the Vila Casas Foundation or the MAMT.