

Málaga hoy

CAC Málaga offers an explosion of expressiveness with 23 works by Julian Schnabel

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Large girl with no eyes by the North American painter Julian Schnabel at the CAC Malaga / ÁLVARO CABRERA / EFE

Curated by Fernando Francés and Cy Schnabel, it brings together large format paintings by the American artist and filmmaker.

American artist and filmmaker Julian Schnabel offers an explosion of expressiveness in the exhibition that opens this Friday at the Contemporary Art Center (CAC) in Malaga, in which he also shows his frequent inspiration from the Spanish artistic tradition.

The exhibition, entitled *Schnabel and Spain: Anything Can Be a Model for a Painting*, can be seen until June 12. There are 23 large-format paintings created since 1997, "a good point of origin because it is just when he is living in Spain and is very inspired by the portrait genre, which has a great tradition in the history of Spanish art," explained Cy Schnabel, the artist's son and curator of the exhibition along with Fernando Francés.

He points out that his father is usually "very involved" in the curatorship of the exhibitions, "because he is an obsessive artist when it comes to the mounting," so "it is inevitable to have discussions with him." "He is someone with very strong opinions, but I managed to establish my own critical line with the selection of the works and the discourse of the

exhibition. One of my goals was to be able to have a balanced conversation, in which I respect his ideas, but the curators' input is also preserved," he explained.

"We already discussed a lot throughout my life, so for this project there was no need," jokes Cy Schnabel, who admits that upon entering the room it may seem that the works are by different artists, because his father belongs to the context of creators who "are constantly reinventing their artistic identity."

Schnabel's paintings represent a constant investigation of the various ways of applying and understanding painting, challenging conventional notions of this medium from his resin portraits or his works made with found objects.

The curator of the exhibition, Fernando Francés, has pointed out that "Schnabel is an artist who revisits the history of art, the typical genre aspects such as landscape or portrait but from perspectives that are not at all established, relying on expressionism or, on occasions, close to abstraction". "In the final result of his works, his look and thought reminds us of other ways of painting from the past," he added.

Thus, known for its multidisciplinary character covering various disciplines from painting to sculpture and film.

Schnabel's work stands out for his constant search to understand and apply painting, one of the main themes that has characterized his artistic practice, which began in the mid-1970s, challenging conventional notions of surface in painting.

On the reinterpretation he makes of some works by Goya or Velázquez, Cy Schnabel explains that it is an exercise that "greatly interests" his father to establish "a relationship with the creation that inspired him, the original stimulus".

It is a "game" in which he "reinvents something from the past", because those works "have something recognizable, but they are not the same, he is not copying them, but maintains a relationship with the past, but the reference does not dominate the reality of that painting, which remains something autonomous and contemporary".

For his part, the painting *Las niñas* (1997) is "based on a lithograph he found in the flea market of San Sebastian", because "everything can serve as raw material for a painting" and his father "has great freedom in selecting the images that can constitute a work".

Regarding the relationship of this artistic facet with that of filmmaker in whom he has directed films such as *Basquiat*, *Before Night Falls* or *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, Cy Schnabel believes that "of course his paintings have an influence on his style as a filmmaker". "The influence is mostly in the way he shoots films, in the point of view, and in the camera there is always a very painterly sensibility and he experiments a lot with different angles. His look as a filmmaker is extremely painterly and atmospheric."

Between abstraction and figuration

The works that make up the exhibition have a particular style that oscillates between abstraction and figuration, characterized by its white stains that run through the work establishing a link with it, the interventions on found materials such as tarpaulins or billboards to which he gives a meaning different from the purpose for which they were created or the appropriation of imagery found in stores.

In the creative process of his works, Schnabel uses diverse techniques and resources such as a hose, pieces of fabric impregnated with paint, his fingers or brushes to execute the pictorial gestures that he depicts in his work. His work shows the artist's constant research to discover and apply different ways of applying paint.

Julian Schnabel's *After Queen Maria Luisa on Horseback by Francisco de Goya - With White House Paint* (2021), which welcomes the exhibition, is a declaration of the artist's

intentions to place the viewer with his work in the context of Spanish painting, establishing a historical dialogue with art.

Portraits are one of the recurring themes in Schnabel's work, mostly done from life and on a background of broken plates, although in the late 1990s he began to produce a series of resin portraits in particular dialogue with Spanish portraiture as seen in *Portrait of Tatiana Lisovkaia As The Duchess of Alba I* (2014) and *Portrait of Tatiana Lisovkaia As The Duchess of Alba II* (2014); *Las Niñas* (1997); *Portrait of Amada Nazario* (1997) and *Portrait of Albert Oehlen* (1997) or *Portrait of José Ramón Artero* (1997).

In these portraits he incorporates his own brand, the incorporation of white marks, which, regardless of the image, evoke the present and reflect our transience as human beings. A confrontation between the past and the present, between life and death", states Cy Schnabel in the text of the exhibition catalog. The exhibition also includes several portraits made with the same technique, such as *Las Niñas* (1997) or *Teresita* (1997), in which he appropriates imagery found in stores or other places.

In early 2000, Schnabel began another of his series, among which stands out *Large Girl with No Eyes* (2001), where for the first time he does not make a portrait from life, but taking as a reference an oil painting of a blonde girl in a blue dress with white trim on the neck, to which he adds a black spot with a brushstroke, covering the eyes of the girl protagonist of the work.

Religion is another theme that the artist has dealt with in his works, in the work *Christ (Victor Hugo Demo)* (1997) where he shows a particular representation of Christ inspired by the well-known painting *Christ Crucified* (1632) by Velázquez. The intention of breaking with the barriers of the canvas or the surface of the work has led him to explore other materials that he has found in different places that he has subsequently used as support for his works "Billboard Paintings" as fabrics that covered the stalls of a market in Mexico or billboards.

His pink paintings such as *Untitled Lona Painting III*, *Untitled Lona Painting II* (both 2015) or *Indications of persistent pattern and significant form* (2017); *Preschool and Afterschool* (2018) or *The Road and The Return* (both 2020) are elaborated on a canvas where he lets us see the stains, holes and effects caused by time. This series is characterized by pink-tinted canvases with abstract strokes of blue and white paint that intersect throughout the work, evoking the works of Antonio Tàpies. His most recent works are billboard paintings where he continues the exploration of new ways of intervening painting.