

Miralda: Unpacking the Archive

Opening Reception: Thursday May 16, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through June 22, 2019

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria, New York is pleased to present *Unpacking the Archive*, the first solo exhibition of the Catalan artist Miralda in the gallery and his first in New York City since 1991. This exhibition takes as its starting point the recently made works *Marianne B* and *Marianne M* (2017), which serve as visual repositories for the artist's career to date and feature elements—in the form of figurines, ephemera and other archival materials in plexiglass boxes—that bring the constellation of Miralda's various projects and installations more clearly into focus. Due to the scope of Miralda's works and the many steps taken towards their completion, the *Marianne* works act as the portal through which we may 'unpack' the artist's vast archive, revealing a better understanding of the works themselves as well as his creative processes.

An aspect of Miralda's work that is featured prominently in both *Marianne* boxes is the assortment of toy soldiers, a direct reference to his required service in the Spanish military under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. As a way of escaping his then current 'occupation', Miralda took to copying the safety and operational manuals he was instructed to learn to an almost comic effect, which can be seen in the series *Bien/Mal* (*Good/Bad*, 1966). In the series *Hazañas bélicas* (*Exploits of War*, 1969), flanks of toy soldiers wage war across the nude torso and posterior of a woman, a nod to the classical European war paintings that commonly featured a nude woman as a symbol of peace, justice or mercy in the face of brutal, bloody battles. These earlier investigations on warfare and the demonstrations of patriotism led Miralda to the figure of Marianne, portrayed as the allegory of Liberty in the Eugène Delacroix painting *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), and whose figurines occupy central roles in the layout of the *Marianne M* and *B* boxes. As curator Julieta González explains in the exhibition text, "The *Marianne Caganera* is rendered here as a *caganer* (small, defecating figurines placed in nativity scenes in Catalonia) in two versions, "métisse/mulatta" and "blanche/white", emblematic of Miralda's explorations in cultural hybridity."

As González continues, Miralda's interest in Marianne sent him across the Atlantic Ocean to her American counterpart, the Statue of Liberty, and to what would be one of the largest, most elaborate projects of his career, *Honeymoon*. Reflecting on the 500-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus arriving the New World, as well as the ensuing miscegenation between two different regions of the world, Miralda envisioned the marriage between the Christopher Columbus statue in the port of Barcelona and the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, a marriage between the symbol of conquest and symbol of freedom. While Miralda experienced first-hand military rites and rituals that dominate daily life during his service, the traditions that define and organize daily life and social interaction only later became a part of his artistic investigations. The events leading up to this marriage, as seen in the gallery as colorful and detailed preparatory drawings, were to involve scores of people across the United States and include performances, happenings and parades dedicated to various nuptial ceremonies, clothing to be worn by the bride and gifts, in the form of food and banquets, representative of the union of the Old and New Worlds.

The inclusion of food in Miralda's conceptual projects began in the 1960s and came to be known as a signature element in his personal and collaborative work. While Miralda had staged previous actions centered on food and community, most famously, his exploration of food, culture and communal space came together in the form of the project, *El Internacional Tapas Bar and Restaurant*, which was run in collaboration between the artist and chef Montse Guillén from 1984-1986. While the goal of the restaurant was to highlight the cuisine of Spain and the Mediterranean, *El Internacional* also served as a hybrid space, a functional, living work of sculpture, assemblage, installation, performance and audience participation.

As González concludes, while the world of Miralda's work may be in part contained within in the *Marianne* boxes and the artist's archives, its expansive and inclusive nature extends ever outwards, creating what James Wines describes as a "unique 'fusion of architecture, sculpture, graphic design, archaeology, feast, performance, ritual [and] technology' that is also a 'fascinating thermometer of social change.'"

Miralda (1942, Terrassa, Spain) is a multidisciplinary artist most known for his sculptures, drawings, films, photographs and public art installations. His early works were largely inspired by his experience as a conscripted soldier in the Spanish military and consisted of sculptures and drawings featuring toy soldiers. Since 1962, a majority of his works have been centered around food. Miralda began creating, in collaborative efforts with other artists, such as with Dorothee Selz in presenting the "Miralda-Selz. Traiteurs-Coloristes" banquets and food sculptures that were made of food and other organic materials and spoke to popular culture and the culture of food within different societies. These works gained popularity and Miralda's small, public food demonstrations became large public spectacles surrounding food, rituals and color. In 1971, Miralda moved to the United States and has since been creating art installations between Europe and the U.S. In 1979, he was a fellow for advanced Visual Studies at M.I.T. The artist is now based between Miami and Barcelona. Miralda's works have been shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1966); Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris (1969); Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York (1972); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1975); Documenta 6, Kassel (1977); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (1978); Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (1981); Museo del Barrio, New York (1984); Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (1988); 44th Venice Biennial, Spanish Pavilion (1990); Philadelphia Museum of Art (1990); Fundació la Caixa, Barcelona (1995); Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia, Spain (1996); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (1996 and 2016); Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas (2004); 27th Bienal de São Paulo (2006); Artium, Vitoria Gasteiz (2008); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010); among others. He is represented in the collections of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; the Collection Centre National des Arts Plastiques - Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, Paris; the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Artium, Vitoria Gasteiz; the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; the Whitney Museum and more.

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