

# BARREIRO

**THE SILENCE  
THAT RAINS LIGHT  
IN THE WINDOW**



XUNTA  
DE GALICIA

**José María Barreiro** (1940) from the beginning has always championed the pleasure of painting, which he has reinvented in an intense project he started over seventy years ago. The French pictorial avant-garde and a free interpretation of historical expressionism are constantly transforming aesthetic recurrences to which he adds nuances with his research into light, colour and space.

The exhibition "Barreiro. O silencio que chove luz na xanela" is based on one of his cyclical iconographies: the symbolic and enigmatic window, an iconic resource merging the interior and exterior of the painting; the affirmation of a solid identity that frequently marks the poetic rhythm of the painted narrative, to which the magical realism painter Urbano LUGRÍS dedicates a poem. From these verses we extrapolate the ideographic body that has been used to create the aforementioned title from the depths of the final lines: "(...): Allí, pintor, donde el silencio llueve, / en tus ventanas llueve clavicémbalos." [There, painter, where the silence rains, / on your windows it's raining harpsichords].

Barreiro's artistic biography starts off in Paris, where he is in tune with the sensibility of the best pictorial legacy of this century –Picasso-Matisse-Cezanne– and consolidates in the early seventies in Buenos Aires. His trajectory then goes on to evolve throughout the half century in continuous re-readings of a prospective classicism that not only lasts over time, but also connects art to life, placing storytelling alongside hope as an image of the paradise that one day we could recover, because, he believes, the human being needs and deserves it.

Structurally, the exhibition is designed around places in his life –Pontevedra, Madrid, Paris, Vigo, Buenos Aires and Santa María de Cela– that have been so instrumental in his artistic thoughts and project and have contributed towards defining a multiple, hybrid and cosmopolitan territory in terms of culture, concepts, languages and iconography.

We shall, therefore, explore his still lifes and his landscapes, the erotic charge of his models, his music and his musicians, his architectures and his memories, the recurrent circus evocation, the old masters of his devotion and a *wide field* painting that he draws in the air like a sculpture.

## Places in my life. Pontevedra, Paris, Vigo, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Cela

"I am a sketcher, a painter, an inhabitant of Forcarey, Paris, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Vigo, Galicia... In my studio, every spring sunset paints the ensemble in a wide range of yellows, whites, pinks and blues.... the magic of colour".

José María Barreiro

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## The marine profiles and the moons: Lugrís/Oroza

Urbano Lugrís, a magical realism painter, and Carlos Oroza, a poet, were great friends of José María Barreiro. Both are remembered by the artist. The first, on the fiftieth anniversary of his death (1973) and the second commemorating the centenary of his birth (1923). The marine profiles and the moons, verse by Oroza, define the connection between the painter of the sea and the poet from *Cabalum*.

After some years passed, Lugrís continues on his life and artistic journey with Barreiro; they move into a beautiful flat in the new Calle Camelias. Lugrís would say: "The person I most admire in the world is Barreiro, he's like an angel of light who meets the most compelling vital needs; a kind of miracle who comes through the door laden with provisions, with a smile that floods the room and life itself. He's somewhat indescribable". At times Urbano would pick up a duster when someone knocked on the apartment door and, taking on his histrionic, sarcastic air, would say: "The master isn't here right now, I'm the butler. If there's anything you need..."

Lugrís deeply felt Barreiro's departure for Argentina, when he was invited there by Laxeiro and Lala in 1969. He would never be the same; his winters in the provincial hospital became more and more frequent and his weary heart faded slowly, dreaming with celestial journeys astride the stars, crossing space to see his friend Barreiro and creating together their final pyrography.

Fernando Elorrieta Rey

### Oroza's poem: *Desde mi ventana*

La nublina se cierra en sus ojos y purifica el recuerdo  
La barbarie —dice— es el origen del invierno.  
Imaginó los puertos  
Las señales  
Las brillantes praderas del sueño  
Y los valles de onilios (...)  
La ventana en que miro me ve desde fuera  
Los espacios son seis y en sus cuadros se forman las  
temporadas  
La impresión traspasa el cristal  
Y la luz se entrelaza desvelando las formas  
Se abre la puerta grande de mi casa  
Y se ven por dentro las paredes blancas  
Una escalera mántrica y una figura  
Un corredor profundo de sedosas materias  
Por el este se siente el oboe  
Y en el sur el tamtam (...)

A José Barreiro  
Carlos Oroza, 1991

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### **To paint is to open windows: Nature/landscapes**

"If to paint is to open windows —an expressive aphorism by someone I can't remember—, standing in front of Barreiro's work is to open, in broad aesthetic enjoyment, the shutters of a cheerful, bright window that opens out onto a fresh, unspoilt country, full of auroral lights and pure, unblemished air".

Urbano Lugués, 1968

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### **The artist's workshop**

"Barreiro's workshop is a cabinet of curiosities, a spiritual space, a refuge of interiorisation, thought, inspiration and expression, a magic box; the scales on which all the truths that define the artist are balanced [...]".

Alberto Barciela

## **The painter and the model. Eroticism**

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Recurring theme based on an aesthetic education linked to Paris; nudes with the sensual erotic charge of the lush odalisques that also defined the philosophy of pleasure, typical of the de-ideologised painting of early postmodernism.

## **Music and musicians**

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Music is reflected in the artist's themes from the start, using the figure of the bagpipe player, one of the most powerful iconographic signs. Musicians, absorbed in playing each piece, with their violins and cellos, in front of a piano, or with an accordion, strive to convey each content to the viewer with the same enthusiasm as the artist would display.

## **Architectures and memories**

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"...One paints life, interprets it and over time in one's better moments, on occasions, improvises a landscape or charming feature of a city, dreaming, reflecting or writing what one feels..."

José María Barreiro

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## **Audiovisual**

The interview for this audiovisual piece was recorded in September 2023 in the studios of José María Barreiro's home in the parish of Cela (Bueu, Pontevedra) and in the studio in Vigo. The other location of the filming was the Taberna Eligio, a neuralgic point of cultural encounters between artists, for decades, in the city of Vigo.

Photographs and documents from the painter's personal archive are shown.

We would like to thank José María Barreiro for his availability, receptiveness and warmth in attending to each of the requirements of this filming, despite the fact that the artist was convalescent from surgery a few days earlier.

## **The circus**

Circus scenes related to the aesthetics of certain French painters such as Bonnard and Seurat provide Barreiro's work with a catalogue overflowing with images full of innocence and joy: trapeze artists, puppeteers and jugglers live in a world of fantasy, without limits or adult interference.

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## **The old masters. Velázquez's *Las meninas***

"In Ramón Faraldo's eyes, Barreiro is related to Dufy, Matisse or Rouault. And not to mention Picasso, because, as Malraux notes, the predecessor of a painting is other paintings".

Antonio M. Campoy

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## **Painting in the air. Sculpture**

Barreiro's sculptural gaze outlines the profile of his iconographies in space and elevates the sinuous, figurative or abstract/constructivist forms to lightness... Barreiro no longer paints on a canvas, he paints in the air and sets the space to music with the slow rhythm of a poem constructed from verses of light and colour.