

MOISÈS VILLÈLIA

(1928 - 1994)



Michel Soskine Inc. is very pleased to announce the **opening of its new space in Madrid** with the presentation of a sculpture exhibition by **Moisés Villèlia**.

After 11 years located at Padilla Str., the gallery moves to General Castaños 9, opening to the public on April 14 with the first major solo exhibition by Moisés Villèlia from the last 30 years in the Spanish capital.

A selection of his bamboo sculptures, mobile and static, from the 80s and 90s, the peak moment of this artist's career, when he mastered the use of the material that gives him greater specificity.

Villèlia discovered bamboo in 1956. The discovery of this new material put before him a wide range of possibilities. Being the first one to use this material continuously and "inventing" its language released him from the sculptural tradition of iron or stone. This material elasticity allowed him to subject it to high stresses, explore the hollow in it, while probing the possibility of conferring movement to the sculptures. Only bamboo enabled such surprising and poetic forms as the ones shown in the exhibition.

With such humble and fragile materials such as wires, sticks, bamboo canes, threads or buttons, Moisès Villèlia was able to build a lasting, unclassifiable artistic work, akin to nature and characterized by a radical creative freedom.

Villèlia deliberately sought isolation to create his sculptures. Through his friend Joan Brossa he met the artists who formed the group "Dau al Set", and others like Joan Miró.

In 1954 he founded the "Art Actual" group, with Lerin, Rabasseda, Lladó and Rué among others, later Joan Prats introduced him to the "Club 49", but Moisès Villèlia avoided commercial circuits to seclude himself in his constructions drawn in space.

MOISÈS VILLÈLIA

(Barcelona, 1928 - 1994)

Villèlia learned woodcarving in the workshop of his father, a renowned craftsman. During his childhood he attended the school Damon, which applied the Montessori method, until the onset of the Civil War interrupted this rationalist education.

At the end of the war, his family moved to Mataró where his father was appointed director of a furniture factory.

With thirteen years, Villèlia left school to work in a factory. In 1945 he began working on carving with his father who had left the furniture factory to open a joinery workshop. From this moment on he became interested in poetry and started doing his first works: figurative woodcarvings,

with expressively elongated and dynamic profiles. He exhibited his first sculpture at the Museum of Mataró in 1949.

Around 1953, after making with his father all the woodcarving of the chapel of Santa Ana (Church of Santa Ana, Mataró), he was fully devoted to sculpture and made his first non-figurative pieces, adopting tubular and elongated forms.

Villèlia comes in contact with personalities from the artistic world such as the poet Rabasseda and the critic Cirici and in 1954 he held his first solo exhibition at the Municipal Museum of Mataró. He presents reliefs that joined the influences of modernism and Eastern philosophy, which since his adolescence were a constant in his life. Joan Brossa visited this exhibition and this marked the beginning of a great friendship.

Through Brossa he would meet the “Dau al Set” group and Joan Prats. In 1954 he founded the group "Art Actual" with his future wife, the painter Magda Bolumar, Lerin, Rabasseda, Lladó and Rué among others, which led to an exhibition of the “Dau al Set” group in Mataró. He experiments with organic materials such as pumpkins, cacti, bark, stems, combined with threads, wires and buttons, into a new working direction, a dematerialized sculpture, based on spatial drawing. Through the influences of Giacometti and Moore, he investigates plaster forms of anatomical resonances. He also begins to use bamboo, often combined with other organic materials into mobile structures. Presented by the “Club 49”, he exhibited at the Sala Gaspar. The well-known sculptor Angel Ferrant becomes interested in his work.

In 1959 he married Magda Bolumar and settled in Cabrils, beginning their collaboration in works of architecture and gardening, among which stands out the Garden Pros, of oriental inspiration. That year he held an exhibition at Mataró to which Joan Prats invited Miró and Matisse. Since then he began collaborating with several architects and started experimenting with construction materials such as concrete, wrought iron or fiber cement.

With a grant from the French Institute he traveled to Paris in 1967, where he mainly worked on his drilled paper series. On his return, he exhibited in Barcelona his drawings and sculptures, grouped in 4 large series: canes, fiber cement, cobwebs and segmentations.

In 1969 he visited Argentina, where his brother was living, and settled in Quito, where he lived until 1972. He collaborated as artistic adviser to the Siglo XX Gallery and investigated local varieties of bamboo higher and harder than the ones he hitherto used.

On his return to Spain he gets back in contact with his old friends: Brossa, Tàpies, Cirici Pellicer, Joaquim Gomis, etc.

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He settled in the village of Molló, and for his sculptures used willow wood, a very common tree in the area. At this point, Villèlia returns to a particular surrealistic figuration, embodied in its "characters", carved in wood or composed of objects' assemblages, to which he adds a certain humor.

He has also worked in industrial design, book illustration and stage design.

In 1974, Editorial Polígrafa publishes an extended monographic book by Maria Lluïsa Borràs.

In 1979 he showed his cane works at the Dreistel Gallery in Cologne and the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York. The Joan Miró Foundation in Barcelona and the Generalitat de Catalunya organized a retrospective exhibition in 1983 that reviewed the various stages of his work.

In 1989 he wrote the play "The Artist", which has been considered as his artistic testament. In

1992, on the occasion of the Universal Exposition in Seville, the Catalanian Pavilion presented an exhibition of his works, with a series of large-format mobiles.

In 1999, the IVAM, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Valencia presents a major retrospective exhibition.

MOISÈS VILLÈLIA (1928 - 1994).

Bamboo sculptures

From April 14 to June 4, 2016.

Opening: Thursday, April 14, at 8pm.

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