

TONI CATANY, PORTRAITS AND CERAMICS OF MIQUEL BARCELÓ

The exhibition “Toni Catany: portraits and ceramics of Miquel Barceló”, records the relationship of friendship and mutual admiration between Catany and Barceló through the portraits that Catany made in the 80s of Miquel Barceló and his extensions (his paintings, his studies, the painting tools), Barceló’s ceramics and the photographs that Catany took of these ceramics between December 2010 and January 2011.

Portrait

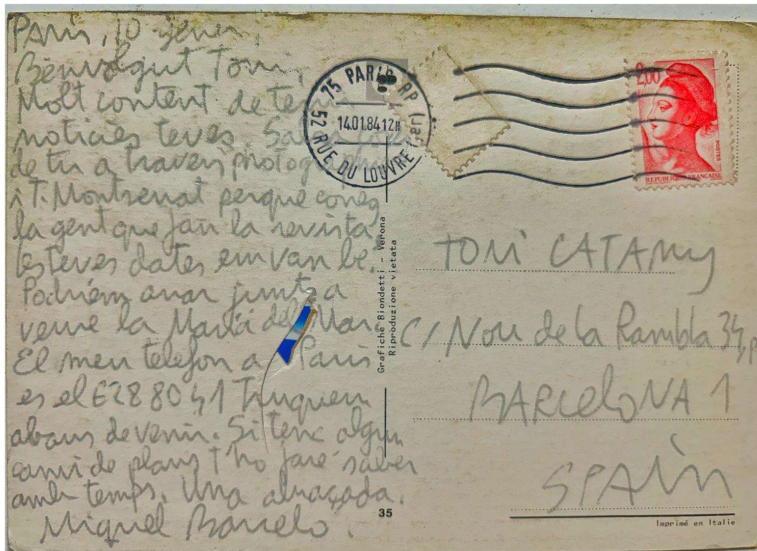
“In portraits, the model, being who he is, must be able to look like someone else. The person looking at it should let herself be fascinated by a face and see it according to her own imagination. The face of a shoemaker can look like that of a king, and vice versa. A good portrait can lie in particular while telling the truth in general.”

Toni Catany

The first photographic record we have of the relationship between Toni Catany and Miquel Barceló dates from January 1980, when Catany photographed a series of Barceló's paintings on commission by Miquel Servera, a cultural promoter and founder of the Sa Pleta Freda gallery in Son Servera. Catany would later portray the Felanitxer painter in action in the mid-1980s in Portocolom (a magnificent Polaroid transfer would result from this series) and, in two different sessions, in his studio in the church on Ulm Street in Paris, in which static portraits of Barceló as well as others while he was painting, are combined with photographs of his works, the objects around him (a jar with a paintbrush, paint-stained boots, a desk with a telephone and a vase with tulips) and the space in which he paints.

In February 1984 **Maria del Mar Bonet** performed at the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris. **Toni Catany**, who was to accompany her, contacted **Miquel Barceló** to take advantage of the fact that he had to be in Paris and try to meet the painter. Barceló responded positively to Catany's proposal with this postcard in which, curiously, he mentions the December 1983 issue of *Photographies* magazine in which there is an extensive article by **Joan Fontcuberta** illustrated with the photographs by **Tomàs Monserrat** that Catany had rescued from oblivion. The meeting resulted in the first of two photographic sessions in the studio of the church in Ulm Street, that same February 1984.

The postcard



Paris, January 10th,

Dear Toni,

I am very glad to hear from you. I had news from you through Photographies and T. Monserrat, because I know the people who make the magazine. Your dates suit me well.

We could go visit Maria del Mar together. My telephone number in Paris is 6288041. Call me before you come. If I have any change of plans I will let you know in advance. A hug.

Miquel Barceló

“My old friend Bob Calle suggested the church in Ulm Street as my studio. It was my theatre, my studio and my place of debauchery for three years, between 1984 and 1987. I went to see its demolition. This photo was on the top floor, where the nuns had their refectory.”

Miquel Barceló, *De la vida mia* (Mercure de France, 2024)

“For the first important exhibition I did in Switzerland, in Zurich, the invitation was a photo where I was wearing paint-stained clothes, very dirty clothes, because in that church it was so cold that I wore a painting suit from the Swedish army that had paint on it... lots of paint, and wearing it I wasn't cold, and Toni took my photo in front of that painting that is a lot of books, it's a very dense photo...”

Miquel Barceló

Ceramics

"We can understand Catany's art best when he uses it to show us the art of another. We know him by the way he looks and by the way he portrays. Thus, when he is in front of these ceramics so full of life, smoke, darkness and mystery - one of the key words of Catany's aesthetic - his visual proposal is not that of the *Cossíols* with which he paid homage to his mother years ago; it is not that of the Still Lives, with which he achieved international recognition; nor is it the texture between coloured and insinuated of the transferred polaroids. No, his response to the appealing challenge posed by Barceló is that of the dark matter of the profane altars and of the last Venice, after all, the photographer's aesthetic legacy. Catany has long assumed that, whatever he does, he is always himself, and the fascination he feels for Barceló's artistic work is real, so he needs no artifice to portray pieces that, naturally, will become, like the vases made by his mother, the little embroidered vases from Felanitx or the Persian miniatures that inhabit the dark yet illuminated corners of his house in Barcelona, elements and objects of his secular altars"

Antoni Garau, "The other secular altars", 2015

In 2010, Miquel Barceló suggested Toni Catany that he portray the ceramics he had produced on the tile factory of Vilafranca de Bonany, his personal and particular creative space. Catany enthusiastically accepted the invitation. For two months he carried out several work sessions in that immense workshop, some days alongside Barceló, who continued to create unique and extraordinarily beautiful pieces there.

These photographs resulted in a book of which Catany commissioned only three copies: one for himself, one for Barceló, and one for Antoni Garau, who was in charge of editing the volume. This book was the genesis of the exhibition "Ceramics of Miquel Barceló" which, organised by the Fundació Toni Catany with the collaboration of the Lluçmajor City Council, could be seen in the cloister of Sant Bonaventura between September 2015 and January 2016.

"I had just made the first smoked black pieces... Toni Catany came to take photos of these pieces with a black background. Black ceramics on black backgrounds."

Miquel Barceló

"An exaggerated self-portrait of my head.
(I didn't have a very good image of myself at that time...).
It's made with about ten wet bricks. I rolled it all up like a monstrous gnocchi. I punched it into shape.
Drilled.
After firing it, I still played with charcoal."

Miquel Barceló