

Enrique Martínez Celaya

The Mariner's Meadow

23 May – 13 July 2019

Blain|Southern London

Private View: Thursday 23 May 2019, 6-8pm



Enrique Martínez Celaya, *The Prophet*, 2018
Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

Blain|Southern is pleased to announce *The Mariner's Meadow*, the gallery's first exhibition with Los Angeles-based artist, Enrique Martínez Celaya.

Here in sixteen new, previously unseen, paintings Martínez Celaya focusses on the sea, a recurring motif in his work, and its relation to the subconscious. Although the paintings betray Martínez Celaya's island upbringing and his deep and lasting interest in literature, they elude any specific biographical or narrative interpretation.

Despite leaving the Caribbean in 1982, the sea has remained with Martínez Celaya as a 'stowaway'. '*The sea*', he writes, '*was the end of all paths and the edge of all comings and goings, the reference point for conversations, and the all-absorbing witness of a history of colonialism and longing.*' In this new body of work, Martínez Celaya considers the sea as an accomplice and judge of expeditions. The artist personifies the sea in various modes; in the instance of *The Mirror (never heard words like these)* it is a passive, yet ever-watchful observer, reflecting the inherent loneliness of human experience, filled with wants and lacks. '*For us, the bounding sea was sometimes a mirror and other times a window, and occasionally a letter, but it was never an eye looking back at us and offering the company we needed.*' On the other hand, the sea in *The Returning Tale* is an active participant that sentences every expedition to return to the same shores, much like the echoing, melancholic cries of the sea birds (in *The White Birds*).

Although often working in multiple mediums, including sculpture and the written word, central to Martínez Celaya's artistic concern is the nature of painting and its capacity to create and sustain meaning. For him, painting is an inquiry that prompts him to often significantly rework a piece several times over the course of months or years. Here in *The Prophet*, for example, the artist worked through a variety of species of sea creatures and human figures before finalising the scene as a girl with one foot resting on a beached shark.

Whilst making an artwork, Martínez Celaya also lays out his thoughts in texts, providing a verbal connection to the works, yet freeing him from the urge to involve language directly in the process of making the picture. His paintings are poetic in the sense that their impact comes from the combined emotional resonance of the individual parts, yet, as critic Barry Schwabsky writes in the publication that accompanies this exhibition, '*they are notably unliterary; they slip their meanings surreptitiously past the intellect's border guards.*'

The Mariner's Meadow catalogue includes an essay by Barry Schwabsky, a conversation between Martínez Celaya and the writer and psychoanalyst Anouchka Grose, as well as the artist's texts and his selection of poetry.

As part of the opening events at the gallery on Thursday, 23 May the artist will be in conversation with Sir Charles Saumarez Smith, art historian and Senior Director, Blain|Southern.

This exhibition follows solo projects of works addressing the land and sky in New York, Berlin and Stockholm, as well as the artist's participation in the 13th Havana Biennial. In addition, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California recently announced a fellowship created for the artist. As a visual arts fellow, Martínez Celaya is working among The Huntington's extensive history, literary, art, and botanical collections to produce new works and programmes.

Notes to Editors

Enrique Martínez Celaya in conversation with Sir Charles Saumarez Smith
Thursday 23 May, 6-8pm

Blain|Southern London
4 Hanover Square
London W1S 1BP

About the Artist

Enrique Martínez Celaya is an artist, author, and former scientist whose work has been exhibited and collected by major institutions around the world. He is the author of books and papers in art, poetry, philosophy, and physics. Martínez Celaya works in a wide range of materials and media, creating works on paper, painting, sculpture and installation. His work touches on leitmotifs of youth, isolation, the vastness of nature, and the sublime. The scenes of Martínez Celaya's work form metaphorical and psychological landscapes. Nature is littered with traces of human inhabitation; a secluded pathway cuts through a field overgrown with poppies; an empty house perched amidst fir trees emits smoke. Employing unfussy compositions and adopting archetypal images from nature such as a turbulent sea, a dense forest or a meadow of flowers, Martínez Celaya's works stand apart from any specificities of time and place, rather, they reach towards something simultaneously humble and mythic.

Martínez Celaya has created projects and exhibitions for the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., and the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, among many others, as well as for institutions customarily outside of the art world, including the Berliner Philharmonie, the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York, and the Dorotheenstadt Cemetary in Berlin. Work by the artist is held in over 50 public collections internationally, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford. He is the author of several books including, *Enrique Martínez Celaya: Collected Writings and Interviews, 1990-2010*, and *The Nebraska Lectures*, all published by the University of Nebraska Press (Lincoln), as well as *October*, published by Cinubia Press (Amsterdam), *On Art and Mindfulness: Notes from Anderson Ranch*, published by Whale & Star Press and the Anderson Ranch Arts Center (Los Angeles, Snowmass), as well as the artist book *Guide*, which was later serialized by the magazine *Works & Conversations* (Berkeley). His work has been the subject of several monographic publications including *Enrique Martínez Celaya, 1992-2000* published by Wienand Verlag (Köln), *Enrique Martínez Celaya: Working Methods* published by Ediciones Polígrafa (Barcelona), and most recently *Martínez Celaya: Work and Documents 1990-2015* published by Radius Books (Santa Fe).

Martínez Celaya is the first person to hold the position of Provost Professor of Humanities and Arts at the University of Southern California. His previous academic appointments include the Roth Family Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Dartmouth College, Associate Professorship at Pomona College and the Claremont Graduate University, the Cecil and Ida Green Honors Chair at Texas Christian University, and he was the second Presidential Professor in the history of the University of Nebraska. Martínez Celaya is also a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College, a Fellow of the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities, and a Fellow of The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. His other awards include the National Artist Award from the Anderson Ranch Arts Center, the Knight Foundation Award, the California Community Foundation Fellowship, J. Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts, Phi Kappa Phi Faculty Recognition Award from the University of Southern California, the Young Talent Award from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Regents Fellowship from the University of California, Berkeley.

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Monday to Friday: 10am - 6pm
Saturday: 10am - 5pm

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