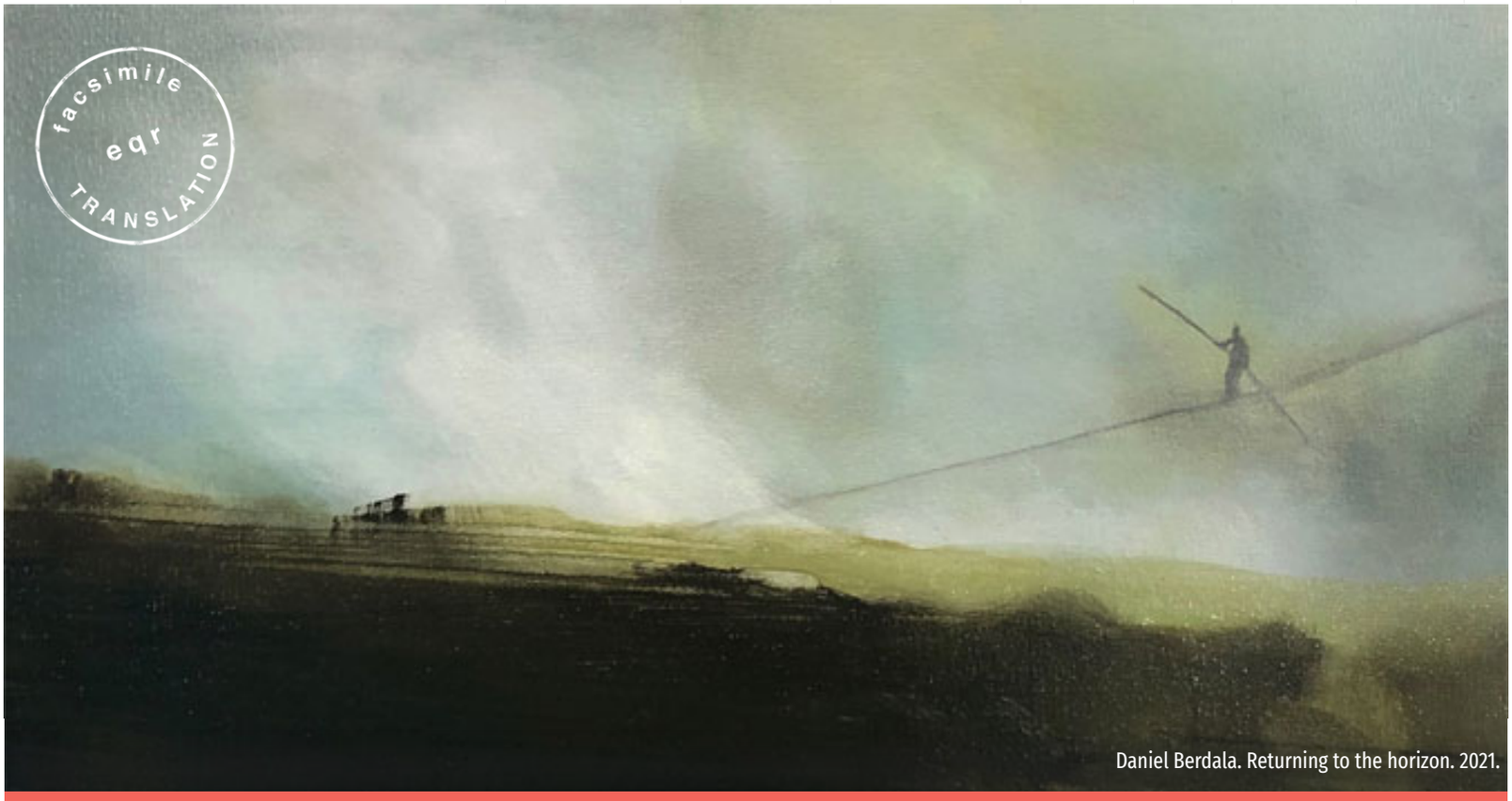

Daniel Berdala. Returning to the horizon. 2021.

VISUAL ARTS

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Art suitcase

Ramon Casalé Soler Oct 05. 2021

The word "maleta" (suitcase) comes from the French "malle", that is, travel trunk, where it is added the diminutive "eta". It mainly fulfills the function of transporting various personal items and is shaped like a rectangular box. Within these personal effects, the suitcase can also contain art objects, as is the case with the exhibition "The eqr suitcase" that is currently being exhibited at the El quadern robat gallery, where its director Anna Belsa has chosen a group of artists, most of them have previously exhibited in the gallery. They are Daniel Berdala, Jordi Casañas, Amparo Fernández, Jesús Galdón, Oriol Jolonch, Salvador Juanpere, Elena Kervinen, Jordi Lafon, Fiona Morrison and David Ymbernon.

La maleta / The suitcase
El quadern robat gallery
Còrsega, 267, main 2a. Barcelona
Until October 30, 2021

It so happens that each of the works can fit in a single suitcase, since all the pieces on display have dimensions that make it possible. Some of the works are new and have no relationship between them, but are part of the ideology of their protagonists.

The catalogue explains the reason for the exhibition, which starts from a personal experience of Anna Belsa during a stay in Germany in 1985, which consisted of an event that occurred at the Schwäbish Hall train station, when a suitcase with the initials HH was deposited at the station and no one came to pick it up for a long time. The station manager was curious to know what was inside. He finally opened it and saw that it

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contained paintings, photographs and sculptures. Later, the owner of the suitcase picked it up, his name was Harry Haller.

According to Belsa "the protagonist of Hermann Hesse's novel *The Steppenwolf* was named Harry Haller. He lived in an attic, surrounded by paintings, photographs and memorabilia. Harry Haller's initials are the same as those of Hermann Hesse, and it is said that it is a biographical reference ". This coincidence, true or not, perfectly serves the gallery owner to make an exhibition story with the suitcase as the protagonist.

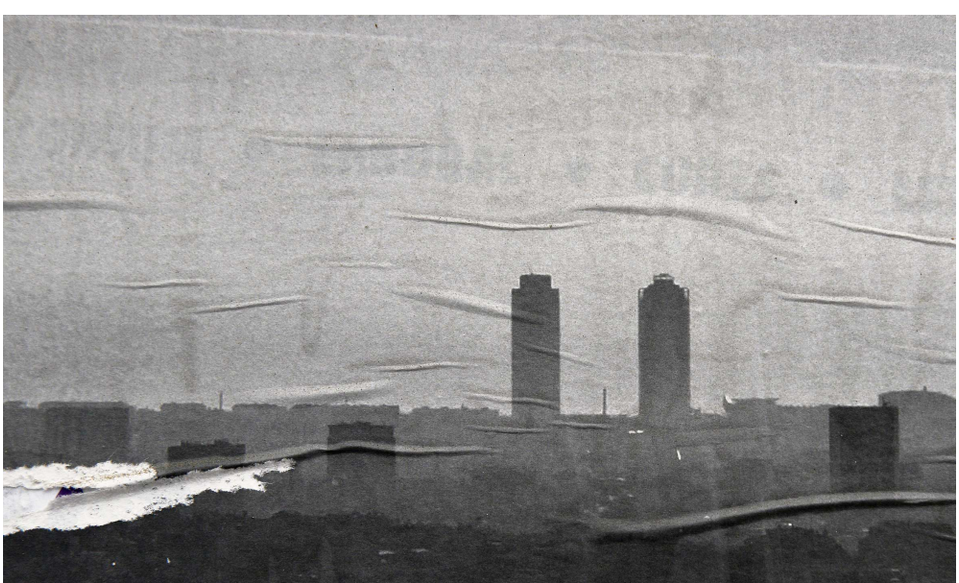
As usual for the gallerist, her exhibitions are very elaborate and well thought out, leaving nothing to chance, since the space she has only allows her to show a certain number of works, but that, at the same time, is also an advantage, since the public can contemplate the works in silence and in a more intimate way, only broken by the explanations of Anna Belsa herself, such as the day I went to see the exhibition. Her comments helped me to better understand the works. Where our eyes do not reach, her explanations lead us to discover the true reality of its creators.

The Suitcase. A journey through contemporary

The exhibition consists of 20 pieces that are divided into five spaces. At the beginning of the tour there is the oil on canvas *Returning to the horizon.* (2021), by Daniel Berdala, where a tightrope walker is about to reach his final goal that is on the other side of the cliff, but this end seems to never come. The artist reflects on the uncertain outcome of the problems our society has suffered lately, such as the pandemic, which the artist himself has suffered. The expressionism of his work transports us to a world that struggles between pain and hope, but knowing the artist, surely the latter will be the winner.

There are two works by David Ymbernon, all of them within the scope of conceptual art. The first is a tribute to the figure of the poet from Lleida Carles Hac Mor, entitled *Carles Hac Mor Action Book.* (2018), where an orange balloon carries an open book. The other piece is *Untitled (cupcake).* (2016), which consists of placing in the middle of the composition a kind of round object in the shape of an orange cupcake and underneath it a series of words as a recipe.

The Barcelona-based photographer Amparo Fernández shows two digital prints from two years ago entitled *Water-air 2* and *Water 12*. The artist has taken them underwater, since she usually enters the underwater world. If we did not know that they were made in this way, we would think that she photographs the water looking for the reflections of light that fall on the surface. The difficulty of photographing a pond from the inside, for example, is evident, since the water is not clear or translucent, and mud and other deposited elements prevent it.



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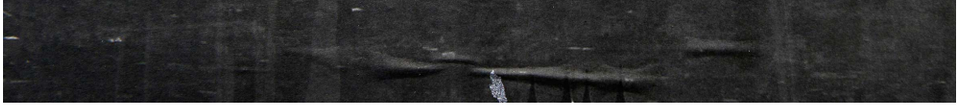


Jordi Casañas. Event horizon. 2019.

Other digital impressions are those of Jordi Casañas, specifically *Event horizon,* (2019) and *Steel trees.* (2018). The first of them was recently exhibited in the gallery, in which *El temps de les arts* referred. The work is divided into two parts. First we see two skyscrapers of Barcelona's Olimpic Village and second the sky. A white sky that contrasts with the blackness of the buildings. The wrinkles that are observed are made previously, that is, Casañas has manipulated the paper before photographing it to give the feeling of a past time. At one side of the foreground two white shapes appear as if they were waves, as a décollage, since a part of the paper has been torn off. The other work represents some leaves as footprints.

Jordi Lafon. From remains. 2020.

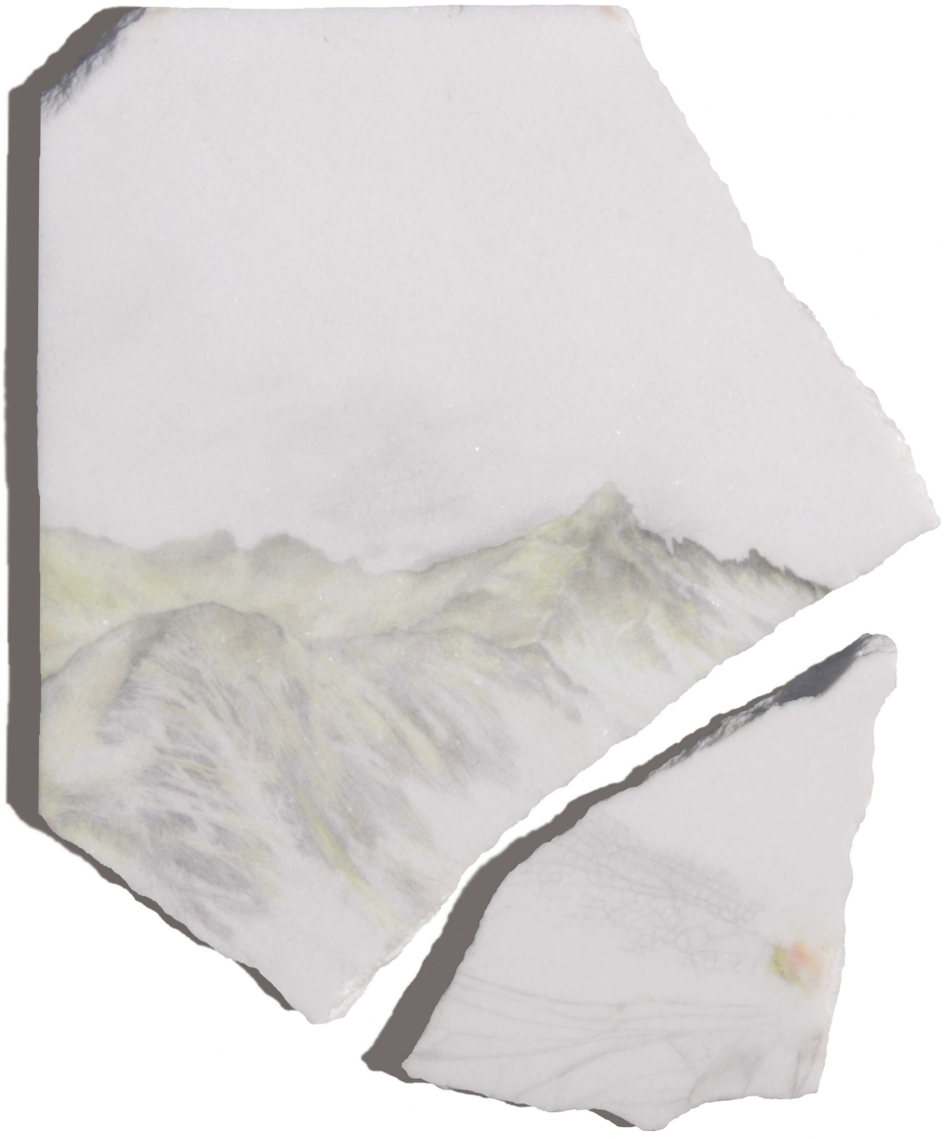
Jordi Lafon, from whom we also recently had the opportunity to contemplate an exhibition at Tecla Sala de Hospitalet, where the idea of accumulation is always present, exhibits a work titled *From remains.* (2020). Here it shows a group of lacquered woods placed vertically that reminds us of Arte Povera. The woods do not have the same measurements and some of them have cracks. The other work that he exhibits is *Chickpeas, lentils and gifts.* (2021), with a series of crumpled papers that he found in a drawer of his studio are arranged vertically one above the other. They are wrapping papers, which transport us to the past, to our youth, when we bought tigernuts or lupins in a shop when leaving school.

Jesús Galdón. The accident of ... 2021.

Hanging on the main wall of the gallery there is a small installation by Jesús Galdón, an artist who usually displays his works in large spaces, such as museums - he is currently exhibiting in the lapidary warehouse of the Museum of Manresa-. Here he has adapted to the space of the suitcase with *The accident of ...* (2021), where a geranium root is located in the middle of two golden aluminum phylacteries. The peculiarity of this piece is that whoever acquires it will not have this root of the geranium, but it will be another, and so on. Therefore, even if the edition is 10 copies, all of them will be different.

Fiona Morrison. Leaf 1. 2019.

The Andorran artist Fiona Morrison presents two transferable on paper with the titles *Leaf 1* and *Leaf 2.* (2019). If we approach the works we will see the enervation of the leaves, as if they were cave paintings of schematic figures found in caves or coats. Besides, also the shadow of a hand emerges to show the presence of the human being in the world of nature that, as Abel Figueras points out, referring to Morrison's previous exhibition in the gallery, “you can also see (...) images of trees, leaves, forests, peaks, clouds, birds and feathers, some images that, together, make up a certain intangible, delicate environment, with reminiscences and memories of nature”.



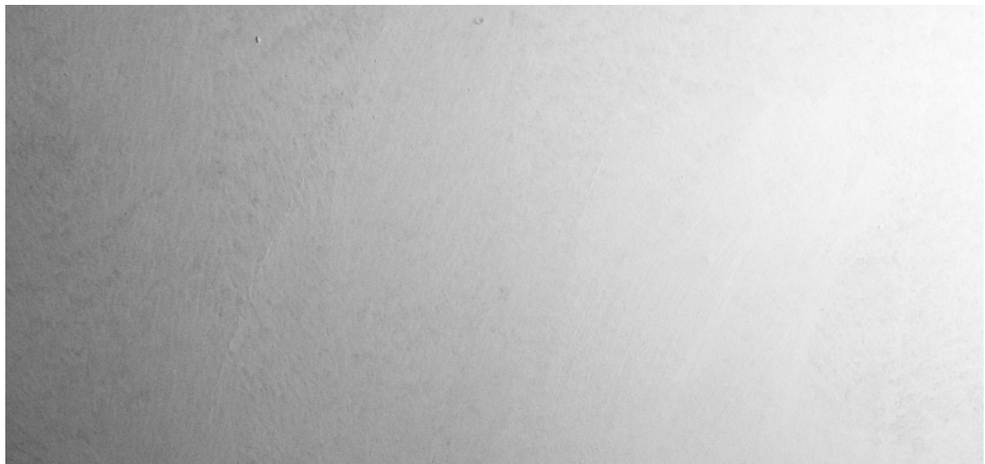
Elena Kervinen. Life of the dragonfly. 2019.

Soon the Finnish Elena Kervinen, who lives and works in the town of Viladrau, will exhibit her recent work in the gallery, but in the meantime we can see three pieces: *Life of the dragonfly II* (2019) and *Feathers 4* and *5* (2021), all of them arranged in a white wall that seem to merge into it, since they are fragments of white marble. However, it subtly incorporates the pencil and the silver and gold tips that appear at certain points in the composition. Both the insect and the feathers indicate the concept of freedom, of lightness. The fact of working on marble, a material for which she became interested in 2006, gives her a feeling of nobility and naturalness, which also supports her drawings. Hers is an almost spiritual work, close to Zen philosophy.

From Oriol Jolonch there are three digital prints from the Mr. Jones series; *Only one eye.* (2015), *To Mélies.* (2015) and *Ying Yang.* (2017), where the artist himself appears from behind wearing a hat as if he were a magician. In the first work we see a large eye above a cloud that is watching us,or what is the same, the human being before the world. The next piece is an allegory of opposites, in this case black and white, light and darkness, while Jolonch makes them move with two rods. And finally, he dedicates a tribute to cinema through the figure of Georges Meliès, creator of the first European film studio.

Salvador Juanpere. Ceci n'est pas la pipe de Brancusi. 2021.

Salvador Juanpere shows two pieces of great conceptual content such as *Ceci n'est pas la pipe by Brancusi.* (2021) and *Puntelli No. 51/1, 51/2.* (2021). The Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi smoked a pipe and that is why Juanpere seeks complicity with one of the most significant works of the surrealist René Magritte: "ceci n'es pas une pipe". In both cases, it is the representation of an object, not the object itself, although this time it is a pipe made of Iroko wood very similar to the real one. As for Puntelli, he refers to the footholds of classical sculptures, showing them as elements that have a life of their own and that they are as important as the sculpture itself. They are made of marble and he shows them as if they were ropes.



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