



José Manuel Ciria:
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Exploring
Abstract Territories



16th May – 23rd June 2013

St. James Cavalier
Centre for Creativity

Valletta, Malta

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

HE Dr Felipe de La Morena,
Mr Gabriel Cremades,
Mr Chris Gatt,
Dr Vince Briffa,
Mr Roderick Camilleri,
and Mr. Jose' Manuel Ciria

José Manuel Ciria:
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**Exploring
Abstract Territories**



MIDDLESEA
A MEMBER OF THE MAPFRE GROUP



◁ **THREE TWENTY THREE.**
Serie Máscaras de la Mirada. 2006.
Óleo y grafito sobre lienzo. 176,5 x 443 cm.

WATER SURFACE.
Serie Máscaras de la Mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 176,5 x 440 cm.



Foreword

The Spanish Embassy in Malta is pleased to present the exhibition, “Exploring Abstract Territories”, of Spanish artist José Manuel Ciria.

José Manuel Ciria is a prominent representative of contemporary Spanish artists, who have gone beyond cultural borders, developing in the process, an original visual and conceptual language.

This exhibition, held in collaboration with St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, offers the possibility to appreciate a profound and creative artist whose work is extremely stimulating. Through this collection one can explore an abstract and reflective creativity, which for ease of reference Ciria classifies in a Series: The Masks of the Gance, La Guardia Place and Abstract Memory.

This is Ciria’s first exhibition in Malta, among many held worldwide. It also offers the possibility to share a creative human experience, at the most personal level, an intriguing

journey, full of profound thoughts and contrasting visual work. I would like to thank him for having been so forthcoming in the planning and implementation of his works.

My special appreciation also goes to the St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, and to its director, Chris Gatt, who has supported the project with enthusiasm from the very first day.

In addition, I would like to thank Eman Grima, the curator of this exhibition, for his clarity of vision and hard work not only for the exhibition itself, but also for this accompanying catalogue.

My thanks are also due to Middlesea Insurance plc for their generous support of this event.

I hope you enjoy this intriguing journey through abstraction.

FELIPE DE LA MORENA
Ambassador of Spain



△
THE CELL. (DIPTYCH).
Serie Máscaras de la Mirada. 2006.
Óleo y grafito sobre lienzo. 176,5 x 284 cm.



▷
Serie Máscaras de la Mirada. 2006.
Óleo y grafito sobre lienzo. 176,5 x 148 cm.



◀ **LA CASA (MÖBIUS).**
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.

José Manuel Ciria:

Exploring Abstract Territories

The existential journey of a creative person is imbued with a multifarious complexity, filled with distress, anguish and disquieting passages, as well as delight, excitement and pleasure. Held by suspense, and a feeling of a boundless uncertainty, the artist brings forth a manifestation of his feeling, thoughts and expression. These are the features which define an artist like José Manuel Ciria, whose work is but a reflection of a search for understanding existence, life and humanity. His works hint at a spiritual quest, and a conceptual or intellectual exploration of reality, human suffering and existence, expressed in a visual medium. This

exhibition demonstrates some passages of this creative unfolding.

Ciria's creative output, paintings, writings and the writings about his work, is very intriguing, characterised by an abstract idiom, at times arcane, having contradictory elements combined together in his pictorial images. His artistic brainchild is a product of a conceptual reflection, a philosophical yearning which takes art into unexplored territories. It can be read in different ways, interpreted and re-interpreted in order to create different levels of meanings, having different dimensions and implications.

Born in Manchester in 1960 of Spanish parents, he moved to Madrid when he was eight years old and today his residencies are in Madrid and in New York. Ciria's versatility makes him a major figure in the diverse Spanish art scene of the last three decades. Since 1984, when he had his first solo show at the La Ferrière gallery in Paris, Ciria has developed a wide-ranging career for which he has been honoured with numerous awards, leading to a wide international recognition through solo exhibitions.

Early in his career, Ciria started experimenting with expressionistic figuration. In the nineties, he developed his abstract poetic expression, combining gestural flow of paint, with the rationality of geometry. In the process he redefined abstract aesthetics. The artist's interest in the diversity of image production, combined with his tireless experimentation in the use of different media and material supports, expanded further his creative activity. His work was characterized by a strong conceptual idea, which he developed in numerous *Series* based on a variety of themes such as, *memory and vision, grief and death, organic forms and signs*.

Another interesting theme which Ciria developed was the series

Rorschach Heads. This Series is a visual test of his creativity as a solution to basic creative problems of modern art. This particular theme is influenced by the Rorschach psychological tests. He created his own *Rorschach test* — applying distinctively asymmetrical colours, *blobs* of grays, black, whites, to analyse the cryptic complexity of the unconscious by portraying images of human heads, perhaps a self-portrait.

Ciria's move to New York, in late 2005, marks a new point of departure in his artistic career which results in a subdued expression in his painting process, using line as a compositional possibility to combine the iconography of figuration and abstraction. In his most recent work, the artist is synthesizing the two extremes of his abstract vocabulary; namely, the dynamic flow of paint and the intense and dramatic expression, while the constructive rigour of the geometry of his composition is more accentuated as are manifested by the works in this exhibition.

Ciria's vast artistic output has been analysed in a very rich collection of essays discussing various aspects of his creativity which evolved in different phases. His imagery is deeply influenced by his Spanish roots, expressed by his forceful splashing of paint and expressive

LEFT
POEMAS DE AGUA. ▷
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2004.
Óleo sobre lona plástica. 150 x 150 cm.

RIGHT
ÁNGULOS.
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2004.
Óleo sobre lona plástica. 150 x 150 cm.

LEFT
RITMOS. ▷
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.

RIGHT
CRUCIFIXIÓN SOBRE PLANOS.
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.



vibrant colours. His subjects oscillate between representation and abstraction, geometric and energetic action.

This exhibition offers the opportunity to appreciate three major phases of Ciria's artistic output, developed through a number of a series of works. These are: *Masks of the Glance*, *La Guardia Place*, and *Abstract Memory*. The themes which are represented in these series are recurrent, time and again in his artist output. The names of these series are often given in a rather playful way, to distinguish from one set of works from another, as he states "Sometimes they might try to give a clue about what the content is, but more often than not, they are just there as a way to tell the series apart."¹

MASKS OF THE GLANCE

The *Masks of the Glance*, is the most far-reaching and perhaps most recognizable Series of his works. Here one finds an expressive output of works which disclose his attempt to synthesize the two classical traditions of modern abstraction, namely the rational reflective formulation and the spontaneous gestural act of painting. They reflect both the *Apollonian order* with the *Dionysian uncontrollable instinct*,

two forces which come together in a visual synthesis.

These works combine the polarity of these appearing antithetical approaches, in order to create a new binary and a new configuration, creating a new aesthetics. The formal geometric structure which constitutes the underlying plane of his works is dominated by vibrant vigorous splashes of colour which give his compositions a forceful dimension.

Some works are composed of an underlying rational structure made of linear grids which are dominated by spontaneous bursts of colour. In other works he does away with the confinement of grids and patterns, while leaving visible hints of linear geometry dominated by impulsive strokes giving vent to his expressive imagination. The colours of these works are characterised by a sequence of red and whites, with underlying light tones of greens and yellows on grey-blackish backgrounds. His bursts of gestural strokes are transformed into continuous bold shapes and lashes of pulsating red and white colours.

LA GUARDIA PLACE

The second series, *La Guardia Place (Suite Green Park)*, features a free

playful use of colour and geometry with a less dramatic expression.

In these works one notes the introduction of new colours which contrast the forceful blobs of reds and blacks. He introduces green to create a complementary effect with the dominant reds. These works reflect a new phase in his artistic oeuvre whereby he introduces organic shapes and new forms in his picture planes. According to the artist this phase is a recollection of his childhood memory in Manchester.

The formal elements of these compositions distinguish themselves by organic shapes which evolve into concrete figurative forms. It is a gradual expansion of his early geometric forms which are gradually transformed into a simplified figuration, which in the artist's own words, "are a homage to Malevich's work and simultaneously a scream in response to figurative painting". Like Malevich's *Suprematism*, Ciria purifies the picture plane from the needless complexity of unnecessary visual expletives in order to focus on essential forms. Although oscillating between figurative and abstract representation, they are independent from the references which are found in the natural world, bringing forth a visual expression of intellectual reflection.

ABSTRACT MEMORY

Ciria's abstract art shows that he is not interested in a faithful representation of the external world around us. He dislikes works where all that one can get is *retinal, aesthetic pleasure* and superficial mimetic visual effects. He argues that painting is a mental process, a conceptual and creative expression. Inspiration is not drawn from nature but from people and society. His visual abstractions and abstract works reflect his concern with an existential boundless aspect of humanity. This can be seen in the last series of works of this exhibition, *Abstract Memory*.

These works gravitate back to his *gestural abstraction*. Expressive overflow of gurgles of colour developed out of a simple construction of squares which evolved into a new intricate compartmental network of frames/windows. In this series one finds different categories of how the painting is produced. Some of these works feature the *flow of colour* which break the confines of the frame without any relationship, whereas others follow the underlying structure of the composition. Others still, express the geometric solidity to the extent that they interfere with the overflowing spontaneity of the gestural strokes of colour.



CONCLUSION

Ciria's work discloses the fertile resonance of pictorial imagery. It reflects the illimitable dimension of visual art, its complexity and its boundless significance as a medium which explores infinite territories of human thought and creativity. It reveals art's infinite resource which opens the borders for intellectual inventiveness and imagination to represent various aspects of reality and human existence.

Eman Grima
Curator of the Exhibition

¹C. C. Casaban, K. V. Weg, D. Carrier, D. Anfam.
Ciria Conceptos Opuestos 2001-2011/ Opposing Concepts. (Valencia: IVAM, 2011), p. 189.

◀ **INTENTANDO RECORDAR EL POEMA.**
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.

DOMINIO DE VERBOS.
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.



REGLETAS.
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm. ▶

DITIRAMBO.
Serie Máscaras de la mirada. 2006.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.



△ LEFT
COLECCIONISTA DE OJOS.
Serie La Guardia Place (Suite Green Park). 2008.
Óleo sobre lino. 150 x 150 cm.

△ RIGHT
THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKIN (VERSIÓN II).
Serie La Guardia Place. 2008.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.

◁
HERMANOS (VERSIÓN II).
Serie La Guardia Place. 2008.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.

PANTALONES VOLADORES (VERSIÓN II).
Serie La Guardia Place. 2008.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm. ▷





△
CELDAS.
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 130 cm.



△
MIRADA OBSESIVA.
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 150 x 130 cm.

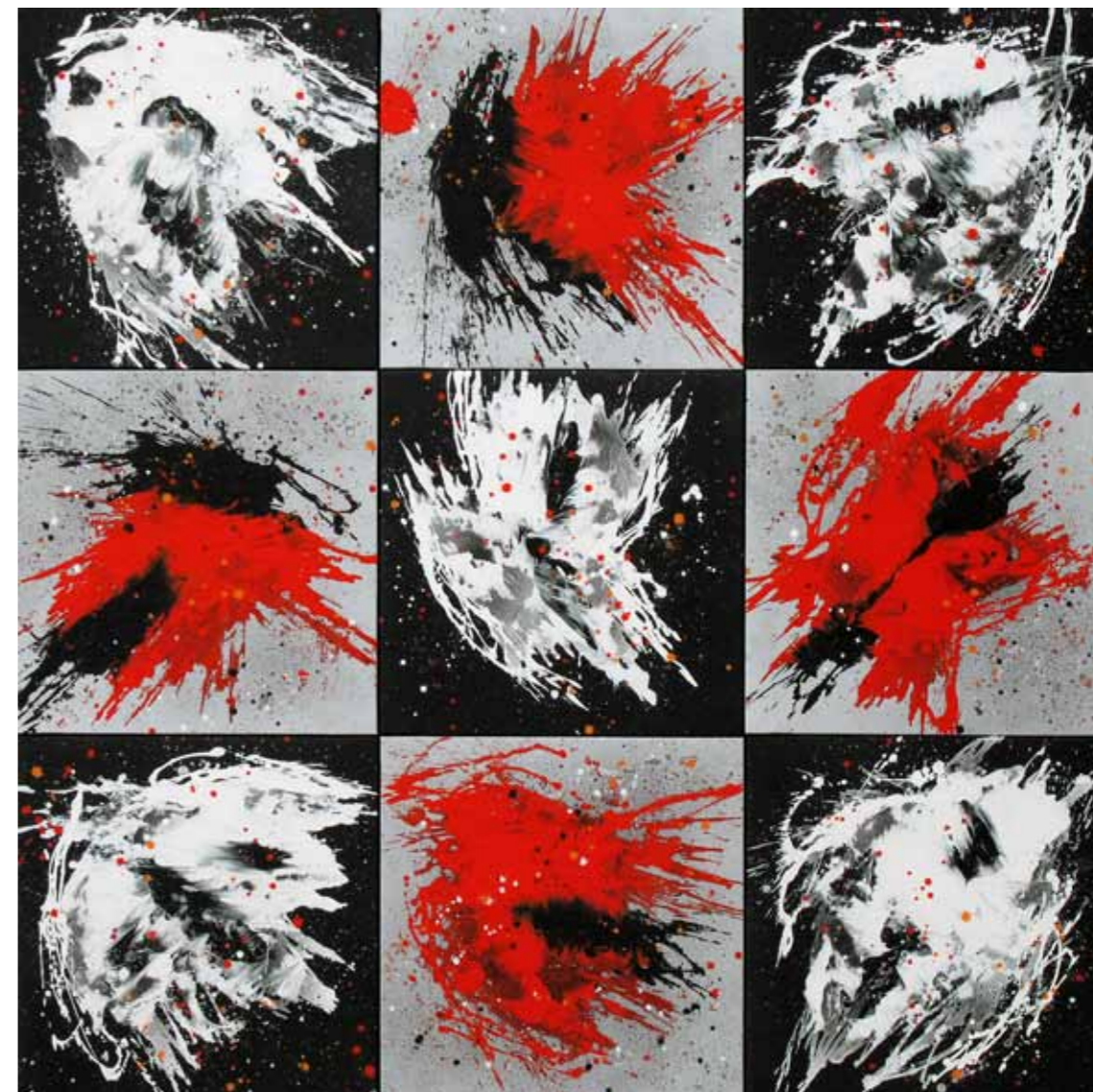
RETÍCULA HABITADA.
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 130 x 254 cm.

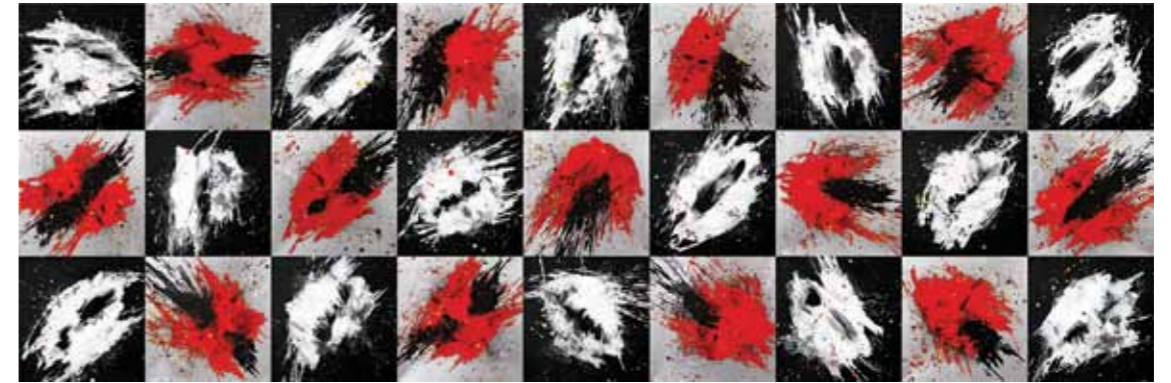


JARDÍN VERTICAL.
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo sobre lienzo. 130 x 254 cm.



RETÍCULA REGULAR I.
Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
Óleo y aluminio sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.
(Composición con 9 piezas).





△
WINDOW DREAMER.
 Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
 Óleo y aluminio sobre lienzo. 138 x 412 cm.
 (Composición con 27 piezas).

◁
RETÍCULA DE COLORES.
 Serie Memoria Abstracta. 2011.
 Óleo y aluminio sobre lienzo. 150 x 150 cm.
 (Composición con 9 piezas).

Solo Exhibitions

2013

Sala de Exposiciones del Gobierno de Andorra, Andorra la Vella.

2012

National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC), Bucarest.
Raúl Anguiano Museum (MURA), Guadalajara (Mexico).
Museo del Patrimonio (MUPAM), Málaga.
Gema Llamazares Gallery, Gijón.
Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto.

2011

Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM), Valencia.
Amarillo Museum of Art (AMoA), Texas.
Cordeiros Gallery, Porto (Portugal).
Stefan Stux Gallery, New York.

2010

Fine Arts Circle, Madrid.
City Council Simeón Palace, Orense.
De Prado Monastery, Culture Counsellerie, Government of Castilla and León, Valladolid.
Museum of Modern Art (MAMM), Medellín (Colombia).
ArteInversión Space, Madrid. Miramar Building, Sitges.

2009

Zoellner Arts Center, LUAG Lehigh University, Bethelhem.
Museum of Art from El Salvador (MARTE), San Salvador (El Salvador).
Museum of Anthropology and Contemporary Art (MAAC), Guayaquil (Ecuador).
Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), Santiago de Chile (Chile).
Cervantes Institute, Chicago.
Kursaal. Kubo – Kutxa Space, (with Jose Zugasti). San Sebastian.
Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto.
Annta Gallery, Madrid.
“BEYOND THE BORDER”. Christopher Cutts Gallery, San Diego.
Couteron Gallery, Paris (France).

2008

Alfândega Museum, Porto (Portugal).
Cordeiros Gallery, Porto (Portugal).
Paris City Hall, Salle des Fêtes, Paris (France).
Carlos de Amberes Foundation, Madrid.
Museum of Modern Art, Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic).
National Gallery, Kingston (Jamaica).
Gema Llamazares Gallery, Gijón.
Art Rouge Gallery, Miami.

2007

National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA), Buenos Aires (Argentina).
National Museum of Fine Arts, Neuquén (Argentina).
San Esteban Church, Murcia.
Christopher Cutts Gallery, Toronto.
Caixanova Cultural Center, Pontevedra.
Caixanova Cultural Center, Vigo.
Gema Llamazares Gallery, Gijón.

2006

Museum of Contemporary Art Ateneo de Yucatán (MACAY), Mérida (México).
Fernando Silió Gallery, Santander.
Pedro Peña Gallery, Marbella.

2005

Kunsthalle Museum Center for the Arts PasquArt, Berna (Switzerland).
Museum of Contemporary Spanish Engraving (MGEC), Marbella.
Santa Catalina Castle, Cádiz.
Museum of Abstract Art Manuel Felguérez, Zacatecas (Mexico).
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chihuahua (Mexico).
Vértice Gallery, Oviedo.
Bach Quatre Contemporary Art, Barcelona.
Italia Gallery, Alicante

2004

State Museum Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
National Museum of Poland, Królikarnia Palace, Warsaw.
Estiarte Gallery, Madrid.
City Museum, Valencia.
Antonio Prates Gallery, Lisbon (Portugal)

2003

Asturias Museum of Fine Arts, Oviedo.
MPA Gallery, Pamplona.
Exhibitions Lounge La Lonja, Alicante.
Casal Solleric, Palma de Mallorca.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Ibiza.
Pedro Peña Gallery, Marbella.
Fernando Silió Gallery, Santander.
Manuel Ojeda Gallery, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

2002

Herziya Museum of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv.
Bach Quatre Contemporary Art, Barcelona.
Italia Gallery, Alicante.

2001

Rekalde Lounge, Bilbao.
Estiarte Gallery, Madrid.
Dasto Center for the Arts, Oviedo.
Pablo Serrano Museum, Zaragoza.
Zaragoza Gráfica Gallery, Zaragoza.
Recoleta Cultural Center, Buenos Aires.
Museum-Theatre Givatayim, Tel Aviv.

2000

Extremadura and Latin American Museum of Contemporary Art (MEIAC), Badajoz.
Architecture College, Málaga.
Bach Quatre Contemporary Art, Barcelona.
Artim Gallery, Strasbourg (France).
Antonio Prates Gallery, Lisbon (Portugal).
Athena Art Gallery, Kortrijk (Belgium).
Salvador Díaz Gallery, Madrid.
Bores & Mallo Gallery, Cáceres.

1998

Guy Crété Gallery, Paris (France).

Antonio Prates Gallery, Lisbon (Portugal).
Athena Art Gallery, Kortrijk (Belgium).
Wind Gallery, Soest (Netherlands).
Salvador Díaz Gallery, Madrid.

1997

Hvgo de Pagano Gallery, New York.

1996

57 Gallery, Madrid.
Zaragozano Bank Gallery, Zaragoza.
Orange Art Gallery, Milán (Italy).

1995

Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Stuttgart (Germany).
ARCO'95. Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Madrid.
NICAF'95. Adriana Schmidt Gallery,

Yokohama (Japan).

Toshi Gallery, Tokio (Japan).
Athena Art Gallery, Kortrijk (Belgium).

1994

El Diente del Tiempo Gallery, Valencia.
FIAC'94. Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Paris (France).
Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Köln (Germany).
The Oidor Chapel. King's College Foundation, Alcalá de Henares.

1993

Almirante Gallery, Madrid.
Delpasaje Gallery, Valladolid.
Ad Hoc Gallery, Vigo.
Altxerri Gallery, San Sebastián.
Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Stuttgart (Germany).

1992

I.C.E. Munich (Germany).
Adriana Schmidt Gallery, Köln (Germany).

1991

Al.Hanax Gallery, Valencia.
Uno Gallery, Madrid.
Nicolás Salmerón C.C., Madrid.

1987

Imagén-Doce Gallery, Sevilla.

1984

La Ferrière Gallery, Paris (France).

Awards

2012

IV Edición Premios Descubrir el Arte (Premio Artista Revelación), Madrid.

2009

Ampliación beca Fundación Gonzalo Parrado, Madrid.

2008

Beca primera convocatoria Fundación Gonzalo Parrado, Madrid.

Revista Wallpaper Primer Premio Internacional a la

Mejor decoración de Iglesia.

2002

Premio Nacional de Grabado Museo del Grabado Español Contemporáneo (MGEC), Marbella. (Primer Premio).

Beca del Ministerio de Cultura y Ciencia de Israel.

Proyecto para el Museo-Teatro de Givatayim. Tel Aviv (Israel).

1999

I Certamen de Pintura Fundación Nicomedes García Gómez, Segovia. (Primer Premio). VI Mostra Unión Fenosa, La Coruña. (Premio Adquisición).

LX Exposición Nacional de Artes Plásticas de Valdepeñas. Valdepeñas, Ciudad Real. (Primer

Premio – Primera Medalla de la Exposición).

II Bienal de Artes Plásticas Rafael Botí. Córdoba.

(Premio Adquisición).

LXVI Salón de Otoño. Asociación Española de Pintores y

Escultores, Madrid. (Premio Extraordinario “Reina Sofía”).

XXI Salón de Otoño de Pintura de Plasencia. Caja de

Extremadura, Plasencia. (Premio “Ortega Muñoz”).

1997

II Trienal Internacional de Arte Gráfico de El Cairo. (Primer

Premio Jurado Internacional).

XIV Certamen Nacional de Pintura. Ayuntamiento de

Azuqueca de Henares. Guadalajara. (Primer Premio).

XXIV Certamen Nacional Caja de Madrid. Madrid. (Segundo

Premio).

I Salón de Otoño de Pintura Real Academia Gallega de

Bellas Artes. La Coruña. (Premio Adquisición).

VI Certamen Nacional de Dibujo Fundación Gregorio Prieto.

Valdepeñas. Ciudad Real. (Primer Premio).

Premio Nacional de Pintura IV Centenario Colegio de

Abogados de Madrid. Madrid. (Primer Premio).

V Certamen Nacional de Pintura Iberdrola-UEX, Cáceres.

(Premio Adquisición).

I Mostra Biennial d’Art d’Alcoi. (Premio Adquisición).

1995 / 96

Beca Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores. Academia Española,

Roma.

1994

Beca Ministerio de Cultura. Colegio de España, París.

V Bienal de El Cairo. (Primer Premio Medalla de Oro

Jurado Internacional).

XIII Certamen Nacional “Ciudad de Alcorcón”, Madrid.

(Premio Adquisición).

1993

III Concurso Internacional de Pintura. Fundación Barceló.

Palma de Mallorca. (Accésit – Premio Adquisición).

Plástica Contemporánea Vitoria-Gasteiz. Depósito de Aguas, Vitoria. (Premio Adquisición).

XXIII Premio Ciudad de Alcalá. Alcalá de Henares. (Primer Premio).



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