MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA

PRESS RELEASE

Unknown City Beneath the Mist. New Images from Barcelona's Peripheries, a unique journey across present-day Barcelona through thirteen new photographic and audiovisual works

► Organised as a geographical and historical journey through an emerging Barcelona, this exhibition contributes to redefining the city's image beyond the clichés of exclusion and the diffuse urban condition of a periphery that no longer exists.

► Curated by Jorge Ribalta, the show includes new pieces by Laia Abril, Bleda y Rosa, Gregori Civera, Gilbert Fastenaekens / Brigitte Van Minnenbruggen, Raquel Friera / Creadoness Textil, José Luis Guerin, Manolo Laguillo, Pilar Monsell, Mabel Palacín, Pedro G. Romero, Carmen Secanella, Jeff Wall, and Jorge Yeregui.

► Jeff Wall's work *Informant. An occurrence not described in chapter 6, part 3* of Last Afternoons with Teresa *by Juan Marsé*, donated by the artist to the city, will be permanently displayed at the Juan Marsé-El Carmel Library.

► This project, supported by the Barcelona City Council's New Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024, aims to follow a local tradition of photographic surveys on urban processes dating back to the pre-Olympic era.

Title: *Unknown City Beneath the Mist. New Images from Barcelona's Peripheries*

Opening: 20 de juny, a les 19.30 h

MACBA Dates: From June 21, 2024, to January 12, 2025

Production: This exhibition has been produced in collaboration with MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona, Fomento de Ciudad SA and the Barcelona Institute of Culture as part of the 2021-2024 Barcelona City Council's Neighbourhood Plan

Curator: Jorge Ribalta

◙ https://www.macba.cat/en/press/unknown-city-beneath-the-mist-new-images-from-barcelonas-peripheries/

This photographic project, about Barcelona seen from the suburbs that sprang up as a result of postwar migration to the city, is in line with the tradition of local photographic projects about urban development since the Olympic era. This tradition ties in with the 'reinvention of the documentary' which began in the seventies and eighties and views photography as a counter-discourse to institutional advertising and media strategies for generating consensus. Since its birth in the 1920s with the promise of reflecting social complexity, documentary photography has offered a principle of reality that opposes idealised representations.

Historically, the periphery has always been the most innovative part of the city, the place where emerging tendencies first manifest themselves. Hence, a project about the periphery will work as a future prospect of the evolution of Barcelona in the next few years and offer significant documentation about the city during the current decade. Organised as a geographical and historical tour of this emerging Barcelona, it contributes to an image of the city beyond the clichés of exclusion and the diffuse urban condition of a periphery that no longer exists.

The project includes thirteen commissioned works, some of a transversal character spanning different neighbourhoods, and others constructed as field studies of a more specific nature. Their focus is also varied, with some purely topographic, while others address social issues. Although this is mostly a photographic project, some works in cinematic or video format have also been commissioned.

1. **Gilbert Fastenaekens /Brigitte Van Minnenbruggen**. *Besòs, territoire élargi* [Besòs, Expanded Territory], 2023

Throughout the 20th century, the Besós River was Barcelona's quintessential backbone, the line that delimited the poor suburbs of the city. This project consists of a topographical tour along the geographic and administrative border of the **Besós**, from the sea to the mountain, through several neighbourhoods. Echoing his work from 1989-1990 as part of the photographic survey for the magazine *Quaderns* for the Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, Fastenaekens returns to the same places thirty years later, joined by Brigitte Van Minnebruggen. Despite the persistence of some of the conditions that make urban life difficult, the tour demonstrates the transformation of an industrial, logistical and marginal territory into an area of new centrality where multiple uses and functions coexist.

2. **Manolo Laguillo**. *Mountain Line*, 2023-2024

Following the footsteps of the project he did for the 1990 survey for *Quaderns* magazine during the construction of the Ronda de Dalt, Laguillo also returned to the same places thirty years later. The **Collserola** mountain range is another of the city's geographic borders, which in this case runs through poor and wealthy neighbourhoods. Languillo's photographic sequence runs from northeast to northwest, from Roquetes to La Teixonera and Vall d'Hebron. The elevation that acts as a border between the poor upper area and the wealthier upper area is the "three hills" (el Turó de la Rovira, el Carmelo and la Creueta del Coll). The heavily mountainous orography is the source of some of the problems and deficiencies of the northwestern neighbourhoods in particular.

3. **Pilar Monsell**. *The Periphery of the Imagination*, 2023-2024

This project – which is transversal, though confined to the north-western area – is an homage to the **Nou Barris** neighbourhood movement, which had a prominent role during the Transition. The social-democratic urbanism of "Barcelona's reconstruction" of the 80s could not be understood without the legacy of the neighbourhood movement of the 70s. This project is also a reflection on the evolution of the social movements from that decade and about the new movements which have emerged on a local scale over the past twenty years. Today, we are living in a moment of inflexion. It raises questions about the role of the neighbourhood moments in the city's future, about how historical and emerging agents, the continuities and the discontinuities, are represented. Film work based on archival material.

4. **Jorge Yeregui**. *Tracing Water. Notes on the Rec Comtal and Barcelona's Water Footprint*, 2023

This work was made across several neighbourhoods, in particular **Vallbona** and **Trinitat Vella**. It follows a route through the historical outline of the Rec Comtal, which to a large extent, is a route that no longer exists; but also through landscaped areas, the Casa de l'Aigua and the Aigües de Montcada gardens. The project combines historical observation with reflections on the sustainability of the current urban planning model. The peripheries have frequently been the location of essential urban infrastructures. By extension, the project addresses the city's water problems during a time marked by drought.

5. **José Luis Guerin.** *First Impressions*, 2023

The farming region in Vallbona, known as La **Ponderosa**, represents the unlikely survival of an agricultural production region within the municipal territory and, in this way, is inserted into the current debates about the conciliation between the countryside and the city and environmental sustainability. Guerin's film draws on the memories of the people in the neighbourhood, postwar migrants from the south of Spain or new migrants from the Global South, and speaks of everyday life and leisure in the farming region, of strong pastoral resonances. Without losing the air of a small Arcadia, it proposes a reflection on the model of economic growth and food autonomy.

6. **Laia Abril**. *Harm Reduction*, 2023-2024

By observing what is considered to be a dark spot (the CAS Baluard, the venipuncture room in the Raval), this work aims to change how this type of institution is perceived and to combat its stigma. Although the addiction problem is not exclusive to **Rava**l, here, it mixes with the iconography and the historical legend of the city's underworld. Laia Abril's project attempts to intervene in the stereotypes from within. In this sense, it focuses not only on the centres themselves but on the entire environment surrounding them. It examines the social inscription of the institution and the neighbour's rejections; raising questions about gender within this context; and it reflects on the evolution of the public healthcare services in the post-pandemic era.

7. **Jeff Wall**. *Informant. An occurrence not described in chapter 6, part 3* of Últimas tardes con Teresa *by Juan Marsé*, 2023

Last Afternoons with Teresa (1966) by Juan Marsé is the quintessential popular novel of contemporary Barcelona; its strength and staying power is equal to that of Francesc Catalá, Xavier Miserachs or Joan Colom's iconic photographs. Marsé's descriptions of **Carmel**'s proletariat underworld and the shantytowns on Turó de la Rovira can be considered a source for suture elaborations of an image of the city constructed from the periphery. These hills are the centre of a geography that is all at once real and imagined. Jeff Wall takes inspiration from a sequence from Marsé's novel to create a staged image, a procedure that he himself labels as "quasi-documental" or "cinematographic photography".

Aquesta obra, donació de l'artista a la ciutat, quedarà instal·lada permanentment a la Biblioteca Juan Marsé-El Carmel.

8. **Bleda y Rosa**. *Turó* [Hill], 2023

Turó de la Rovia is an extraordinarily rich location that contains several historical layers, from the remains of Iberian settlements to the pavements of postwar shantytowns, moving to its anti-aircraft role in the Civil War and its more recent recreational use by young people. It is a

true microcosm that captures the history of Barcelona like few other places. Following a methodology that aims to objectify and make visible the historical density of specific emplacements, Bleda and Rosa carry out an archaeological observation that reveals these different layers.

9. **Gregori Civera**. *Casas Baratas*, 2023-2024

Gregori Civera observes life today in the two Casas Baratas developments that have been conserved. These sets of small, single-story structures are an example of the first social housing policies in Barcelona from the turn of the 20th century. Focusing on the opposite cases of **Can Peguera** and **Bon Pastor** the project shows both their persistence and their disappearance, the rehousing of the neighbours and the recent creation of the Tenement Museum, a historical testimony of an urban development in the process of disappearing. Civera has also included images of the current places corresponding to the two defunct developments, those of Baró de Viver and Eduard Aunós.

10. **Pedro G. Romero**. *What Goes Below*, 2023-2024

Pedro G. Romero approaches the new flamenco scene in Barcelona by focusing, above all, on the Desvarío festival, which is celebrated in **Nou Barris**. Barcelona has held a leading role in the history of flamenco in Spain. This project departs from this historical foundation to establish a new cartography: combining recordings of contemporary artists with tours of significant sites of flamenco culture in Nou Barris, such as the old psychiatric hospital of Santa Cruz, the current headquarters of the district and the festival, or some clubs and schools. It also examines the relationship between flamenco and the social and neighbourhood movements across Barcelona.

11. **Mabel Palacín.** *Storyline*, 2023-2024

In the foothills of **Montjuïc**, Palacín has carried out a transversal work about the condition, the role and the uses of parks in the peripheries. The artist asks to what extent the park is an element that contributes to urban quality or acts as an index of the peripheral condition as an ambiguous area between the countryside and the city. Montjuïc also housed shantytowns, but its proximity to the historic centre and the port has generated another type of peripheral conditions, exempt from urban connotations. This collective portrait of the people who populate the mountain and the social condition of its inhabitants and users marks it as an in-between zone between integration and exclusion.

12. **Raquel Friera/Creadoness Textil**. *But Na But* [Once and Not Once Upon A Time]**,** 2023-2024

Martha Rosler. *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, New Series*, 2004–2008 [selection]

Community work with the collective Creadoness in the Raval neighbourhood – a program that offers technical training in sewing to migrant women in vulnerable conditions – and the artist Raquel Friera. In this case, the project has been conceived as an embroidery workshop with a heterogeneous group of refugee women from Afghanistan, who denounce their traumatic lived experiences and demand the right to female education. The embroideries, made on the traditional white handkerchiefs of Afghan students, dialogue with the photomontages by Marth Rosler, whose reflection on domestic work and the ideologies implicit in gender is at the root of this workshop.

13. **Carmen Secanella**. *New Landscapes. Strolls through La Marina*, 2021-2024

The neighbourhoods of **La Marina**, traditionally called the Zona Franca, are experiencing a profound transformation, characterised by the relatively anarchic coexistence of different uses and activities. The current mutation of this territory is the most dynamic and radical of all those happening across Barcelona today, and, in a way, it echoes the transformations of the neighbourhoods of Besós during the Fórum 2004. However, this is an overlooked and underrepresented process. Secanella's work highlights the difficulty of constructing a point of view about the ongoing transformation, and the extreme fragmentations of the new social subjects.

This exhibition has been produced in collaboration with MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona, Fomento de Ciudad SA and the Barcelona Institute of Culture as part of the 2021-2024 Barcelona City Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Artist biographies*:* https://www.macba.cat/en/exhibitions/unknown-city-beneath-the-mist-new-images-from-barcelonas-peripheries/#artists

PUBLICATION

Unknown City Beneath the Mist. New Images from Barcelona's Peripheries

The publication *Unknown City Beneath the Mist. New Images from Barcelona's Peripheries* takes a visual and geographical journey through the historically peripheral territories of the city via thirteen projects articulated by artistic representation and civic debate. The selection of images that make up this itinerary is accompanied by a collection of texts in the form of conversations that bear witness to the work process as well as the debates that have unfolded.
The volume is published by MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona in collaboration with Foment de Ciutat and the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona as part of the Barcelona City Council's New Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2024. It is published in two editions: one in Catalan and the other in Spanish.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

Wednesday 19 June, 19:00: *The Last Afternoon. Jeff Wall Portrays Juan Marsé*.
Round table with Josep Maria Cuenca, Miquel Molina, Custodia Moreno and Jeff Wall.
https://www.macba.cat/en/activities/la-ultima-tarde-jeff-wall-depicts-the-work-of-juan-marse/

Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 July: *Lines of Flight. On Barcelona, Flamenco and the Nou Barris.*
Two sessions of talks and performances with Mariví Blasco, Pastori Filigrana, Lorena Padilla, Pedro Barragán, Paco Aroca, Jordi Corominas, Juan Antonio Suárez 'Canito', Gabriel Cortes, María García Ruiz, Pere Martínez, Costi El Chato and Maria Cabral.
Programme curated by Pedro G. Romero, as a precursor to the Desvarío Flamenco 2024 festival. www.desvarioflamenco.com

Wednesday 16 October: *End of an Era? On the Current Inflexion of the Neighbourhood Movement*
Round Table with Marc Andreu, Elia Herranz and Albert Recio.

Sunday 20 October: *La Marina is not the Zona Franca*
A visit through Marina del Port and Marina del Prat Vermell, led by Emili Hormias and Jaime Pérez.

Wednesday 23 October: *Work Materials*
Screening of the film in progress by José Luis Guerin.

Wednesday 6 November: *The City Seen from the Peripheries as a counter-discourse*
Round table with Manuel Borja-Villel, Juan Herreros, Josep Lluis Mateo and Joan Roca.

Wednesday 13 November: *Two Peripheral Films*
Film screening by Pilar Monsell.

Tuesday 19 November: *What Goes Below*.
Screening and flamenco gathering led by Pedro G. Romero.

Wednesday 27 November: *Photographing the Periphery*
Round table with Arnau Bach, Gregori Civera, Lourdes Delgado, Julia Montilla and Carmen Secanella.

Schedule subject to change. The activities take place in different locations across the city. More information at www.macba.cat