



MIRALDA

DO NOT CROSS. Unpublished photographs 70's - 80's

From June 4th until July 23rd of 2022

Gallery MPA / Moisés Pérez de Albéniz is pleased to present Antoni Miralda's second exhibition in the gallery, titled *Do not cross. Unpublished photographs 70's - 80's*.

Curated by Ignasi Duarte

Considerations about the afterlife

*The wise person has his eyes in his head,
but the fool walks in darkness.*

Kohelet 2:14

On March 24th, 2021, I found by chance, among the hundreds of thousands of documents that Miralda treasures in his archive, a series of photographs he overlooked completely. When I tried to convince him that they not only had great artistic value but that they also gave a new meaning to his plastic work, he just arched his eyebrows.

Miralda never wanted to be a photographer.

This discovery pointed me towards an unpublished collection of over 7500 black and white negatives that had been scattered around for decades in several boxes and folders.

Miralda was never interested in photography as an art practice. He had other concerns. Although a collage created in 1962 with some of his first snapshots had made him worthy of a grant from the Provincial Council of Barcelona to continue his studies in Paris, we could attribute it to a learning stage during which he had not consolidated his own form of expression. Albeit his enthusiasm for photography –He had received very good training from his father—had allowed him to express his first ideas, it also opens a professional path for him, once settled in France, as a fashion photographer for ELLE magazine. In parallel, he took rather conceptual photographs that were complementary to proposals embedded in other artistic disciplines. For instance, the wonderful series of images that is part of *Soldats Soldés* (1965-73).

During the months when we compiled and classified the old negatives, some of the distinctive uses of how Miralda conceives photography became clear. He uses it as a research and documentation tool associated to the monumental artistic projects by which he stands out. This is the reason why hundreds of images were dismissed immediately, since they are subsidiaries of other works.

The fundamental question, after all this time, the true finding, has been the understanding of how Miralda uses photography when it falls within the strictly private sphere. Miralda takes photographs to be able to see. Protected behind the camera, he builds reality, he invents it. Photography is the genesis of the worldview he feeds the entirety of his known work with. Firstly, because they precede this one: the first images, dated during the 1959-61 period, already show a sociopolitical concern regarding the orchestration of the collective in religious or, later, military expressions like when he lampooned the army in the snapshots taken during his military service. The critical mind Miralda dissects society with –through a sophisticated sense of humor—is more direct and vicious than when it is overlapped behind what is falsely popular in his performances. His photographic archive puts together an extensive repertoire of what is alien, and thanks to it we can witness how he delves into the cultural particularities that define the different human groups he portrays.

Do Not Cross is a metaphysical statement that law enforcement agencies have appropriated to set the boundaries of perception, even to stop time momentarily with the aim of touching its inner history. Or, in the case of events that have not happened yet, of demarcating an ephemeral stage in which the passerby takes on a merely testimonial role, where they suspend not only their judgement but also their ability to interact with their surroundings. The ultimate goal is that the bulk of the population does not give in to the temptation of experiencing that time of interlining—liminal space forbidden to the uninitiated ones-- , denying them the possibility of an epiphany.

Do Not Cross serves also as the title of the 54 black and white photographs exhibition that Miralda does in the United States during the 70's and 60's of the last century.

In the first room, the images welcome us to the deep America where the showcase delves into, and where Miralda's work directly relates to the work of American photographers of his generation. Everyday life is articulated from takes that, despite the numerous ellipses, configure a narrative sequence that brings us back to film noir, because of the subject it implies and the gruesomeness of the characters and scenarios.

In the second space, we are induced to go beyond, to go through conventions and participate in an extraordinary time, devoted to pagan rituals and religious ceremonies. The photographs gathered in this room question our role of passive onlookers, distanced even from ourselves.

There are two times, two calendars. The one that hangs from the kitchen wall and times the routine, and the one that is behind and is the core of the first one: the place where mysteries are

released, the catharsis that escapes social control. There is a time to work and a time to kill; there is a time to look and a time when we must pluck our eyes out.

We would do well in considering Miralda as one of the most talented photographers of the second half of the 20th century, at least in Spain.

Ignasi Duarte
Exhibition Curator