

"la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art Selected by Enrique Vila-Matas

The preeminent novelist **Enrique Vila-Matas** (b. 1948, Spain) has chosen six works from "la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art for their links to his personal literary history. Known for his metafiction, Vila Matas has titled this exhibition and his accompanying text *Cabinet d'amateur, an oblique novel* in homage to a story by French writer Georges Perec (1936–1982) that centres on a painting containing other paintings which, in turn, generate further fictions.

Fascinated by portraits, Vila-Matas includes figurative works with 'real presence' as well as ghostly apparitions. *I.G.* (1993) by **Gerhard Richter** is the lynchpin around which the exhibition and his own literary biography revolve. For Vila-Matas, this female portrait 'in reverse' is a reflection on the nature of painting and emblematic of the ambiguity of experience, whereas *Milonga* (1980) by **Carlos Pazos** seems to be a more faithful representation. The hand-coloured photograph, a melancholic self-portrait, was staged at the time of Pazos's thirtieth birthday to reflect a turning point in his life and work. In a disquieting video by **Dora García**, a young girl is given breathing lessons by a woman who trains her how to breathe but also to stop breathing. Another girl, a

spectral presence, haunts **Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster**'s modernist glass space, continuously conjuring images of people and things.

A landscape painting by Vila-Matas's compatriot **Miquel Barceló** serves to bring the author back down to *terra firma*. This mixed media canvas literally includes a handful of earth on its irregular surface. By contrast, **Andreas Gursky** uses digital photographs taken from different vantage points to create a seamless desert landscape in Egypt, constructing an expansive aerial view that also includes a detailed record of the ground.

This display is accompanied by a fully-illustrated publication, featuring Enrique Vila-Matas's *Cabinet d'amateur, an oblique novel* and a conversation between Nimfa Bisbe, Head of Art Collections, "la Caixa" Foundation, and Lydia Yee, Chief Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.

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