

ENRIQUE MARTÍNEZ CELAYA

THE SEA MEMORY (FOUND)

7 SEPTEMBER - 21 OCTOBER 2023
520 WEST 21ST STREET

NEW YORK – MILES McENERY GALLERY is pleased to announce *The Sea Memory (Found)*, an installation of paintings by Enrique Martínez Celaya, on view 7 September through 21 October 2023 at 520 West 21st Street. Accompanying the exhibition is a fully illustrated publication featuring a foreword by Alexander Nemerov, the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Provostial Professor in the Arts and Humanities at Stanford University, and a conversation between the artist and the historian and poet Barry Schwabsky, as well as an afterword by the artist.



The Sea Memory (Found) is part of a new cycle of paintings that share size, structure and motif—a rare approach for Martínez Celaya—and follows a recent related exhibition in Florence, Italy, *The Sea Memory (Lost)*. The imagery of the paintings (sea and flowers) conjures themes of transience and permanence, and evokes ideas of beginnings, hope, markers, belonging, preservation, presence, vanishing, endings, loss, mourning, and longing. At the same time, these paintings embody a philosophical struggle with painting itself.

In building this body of work, the artist first completed and meditated on each distinct depiction of the ocean—waves, whitewater, currents, and all—before flowers from his personal history emerged onto their foregrounds: wispy lilies, tightly rendered hollyhocks, an ethereal gardenia. Once Martínez Celaya painted the flowers onto the compositions, he made very few adjustments to their background waters; “I wanted a sense of immediacy, of placing something there and accepting the consequences,” he says. Rather than having a decorative quality, the painted flowers, which share a consistent horizon line across the gallery walls, can be experienced as portraits or, as Alexander Nemerov writes, saints.

Over the last three decades, Enrique Martínez Celaya has created an extensive body of work characterized by simple compositions and archetypal imagery, using painting, sculpture, photography, and installation in an endless search for meaning. Grounded in the personal and evolving to the universal, Martínez Celaya’s work creates a poetic world that connects across thematic motifs and communes with disciplines outside of the artworld, including philosophy, literature, and science.

This show is the first of multiple notable forthcoming exhibitions of Martínez Celaya’s work, including at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA (current); The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; The Hispanic Society Museum & Library, New York, NY; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Wende Museum, Culver City, CA; and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Panama City, Panama.

ENRIQUE MARTÍNEZ CELAYA (b. 1964) received his Bachelor of Science from Cornell University, his Master of Science from the University of California, Berkeley, and his Master of Fine Arts from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is Provost Professor of Humanities and Arts at the University of Southern California, Distinguished Professor for the MFA program at Otis College of Art and Design, and a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College.

Martínez Celaya has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy; Secci Gallery, Florence; Miles McEnery Gallery, New York; UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles; Fisher Museum of Art, University of Southern California, Los Angeles; Monterey Museum of Art, CA; and The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA, among others.

His work may be found in numerous international institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

The recipient of a myriad of honors and accolades, Martínez Celaya has held fellowships at the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, Carmel-By-The-Sea, CA; The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA; Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities, University of Southern California; Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; and the Paul J. Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts, Los Angeles. In 2022, he was recognized as a Distinguished Mentor by Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, following his appointment as a Doctor Honoris Causa and serving on the institution's Board of Governors.

The artist lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

For press inquiries, please contact press@milesmcenery.com

Image: *The Omen (Tulip)*, 2023, Oil and wax on canvas, 72 x 60 inches, 182.9 x 152.4 cm