

# Art | Exhibitions

## Single file



*Les Rambles, Barcelona (1956), Ramon Masats*

The birth of photography and the rise of the modern city followed each other hand-in-hand in the last decades of the 19th century. After its invention, the camera quickly became an instrument for documenting and ordering the infinite variety of the world into a base of knowledge in the form of a 'universal archive'. Celebrating the utopian notion of such an archive, MACBA has brought together over 1,000 photographs to examine the intricate relationship between the history of photography and the representation of global cities.

Beginning with late 19th-century France, the exhibition charts how the first photographers visually recorded the vestiges of old cities. In Paris, Eugene Atget compiled an archive of 8,000 negatives devoted to old shops, crafts and pre-modern fortifications that were disappearing from the French capital.

The archival impulse took on a different form in New York where Bernice Abbot and Lewis Hine illuminated the vibrant street life of the growing metropolis with stirring photographs of immigrant New Yorkers crowding onto subways and building skyscrapers. With the rise of photographs printed in popular mass-distributed magazines and books, documentary photographers helped foster and advance the representation of the street as democratic space and construct the image of the anonymous citizen, the common man. Similarly, the public reception of photography around Europe (London, Berlin, Paris and Barcelona) contributed to a re-imagining of the possibilities and challenges of modern city life.

Locally, photography has played an integral part in promoting and documenting large public work projects from the opening up of the old city with the 1908 construction of Via Laietana to the creation of Avinguda Diagonal and other Olympic transformations of the late Eighties.

'Universal Archive' concludes with diverse and captivating visions of the new Barcelona offered by a talented mix of international and local photographers. The MACBA-commissioned survey, 'Imatges metropolitanas de la nova Barcelona', reveals the changing face of the city with photographs focusing on a wide-range of subjects from the suburban sprawl of the Vallès to new social groups like the Latin Kings. While YouTube's video database may be what most closely resembles a present-day 'universal archive', both the exhibition and the commissioned survey compellingly show how photographic archives still hold out the promise of helping us see the city with new eyes.

-- Alexander McSpadden  
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### Arxiu universal

MACBA

Until January 6th 2009

[www.macba.es](http://www.macba.es)



*Self-portrait*

While some artists take on our preconceptions of reality with lazy ambiguity, through abstraction and recourse to the absurd, another school—the Francis Bacon school, if you like—fires reality at us with the fury of a hurricane, bound by the startling beauty of sharp artistic technique.

Indonesian artist Jazz Pasay belongs to this group. Born in 1961 in Surabaya (East Java), Pasay studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York. His work draws on the Javanese spiritual belief of *kejawen*, which is the search for inner self. Yet in his latest show 'Bungkam', meaning both silence and silenced, harmony has become a euphemism for control and submission.

Pasay's art embodies a multitude of perspectives frozen in interminable conflict, and we are wrenched from one to the other. In 'Calm', torturer

Reviewed shows are rated by our writers with a star system: the more pink stars a show has, the better it's rated; \*\*\*\*\* is the lowest rating while \*\*\*\*\* is the highest

OPENING



*Vendrick's Cove (2008)*

While the British isles are not generally famed as a beach destination, the nation's coastline is an exceptional geographical feature: from Dover's white cliffs to the extensive beach at Southport that doubles as an airstrip to the battered rock stacks of the Shetland Isles, the landmarks of an island's isolation can also be its most captivating characteristic. This show of works by British artist Zoe Benbow features her recently made landscape paintings of the South Devon coast, a picturesque and spectacular part of the edge of Britain. Benbow has created a series of works where she breaks down then reconstructs the sandy beaches and monstrous rock formations of the area. 'Vendrick's Cove' (above) highlights the contrast between the deep, aqua tones of the English Channel and the greys, browns and yellows of the onland geology formed over centuries into haphazard beauty. Benbow's works are large-scale—as well as canvases, she also produces murals for swimming pools and designs for corporate headquarters—a fitting format for landscapes such as these that portray the foundations of a nation and its mindset. Also running at La Galeria, neatly juxtaposing with Benbow's paintings, are images by French photographer Martine Mougine of the Barcelona Port, a totally different perspective of the place where sea and land meet. -- Hannah Pennell

### Zoe Benbow

December 11th to January 24th 2009

La Galeria

Consell de Cent 279, Tel. 609 386 517

and tortured, oppressor and oppressed, feared and fearful all become one. In other works in the show, the confrontational themes continue: 'Acceptance' shows submission, 'Meditation' pleading, and 'Consensus' is volatile.

In our current culture of mistrust and betrayal, of short-selling, cheating and vulture-like speculation, for Pasay, even the moments of peace are misinterpreted: nostalgic odes to past atrocities, glazed as glories. Yet in presenting these psychological demons with such accomplished candour, Pasay takes the first step in vanquishing them.

-- Alex Phillips  
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### Bungkam, Silence(d)

Tasneem Gallery

Until January 19th 2009

[www.tasneemgallery.com](http://www.tasneemgallery.com)