

ROBILANT+VOENA

ROBERTO MATTA

3 March – 20 April 2017

38 Dover Street, London W1S 4NL

ROBILANT+VOENA are pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Roberto Matta (1911-2002) on view at their London gallery from March 3rd to April 20th 2017. This will be the first exhibition at the gallery dedicated to the celebrated Chilean artist. The exhibition will include works the artist realised between the 1940s to the 1980s, bringing together an important selection of twelve paintings from the artist's oeuvre. Other works from this period, such as *The Vertigo of Eros* (1944) can be seen at MoMA in New York and *Black Virtue* (1943) is currently on display at the Tate Modern.

Matta features amongst Chile's best known painters as well as being a seminal figure in 20th century Abstract Expressionist and Surrealist art. In 1936 he met poets Federico García Lorca and Pablo Neruda, who introduced him to Salvador Dalí and André Breton. Matta showed his drawings to Breton, the poet and leader of the French Surrealist group, who encouraged him to experiment in the Surrealist style. In 1937 Matta joined the French Surrealist group where he was actively involved publishing articles and illustrations in Surrealist publications such as *Minotaure*. Matta also worked at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery Art of the Century, alongside Max Ernst, at the same time his work became extremely influential to emerging Abstract Expressionist painters. Some of Matta's contemporaries included Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, Mark Rothko and Robert Motherwell. In the 1940s and 1950s, Matta produced works which featured machine-like and invertebrate shapes merging in a dynamic cosmic space such as *Untitled* (1952), *Mourir pour le pain* (1953) and *Untitled* (1956). Since the 1960s, Matta's artistic production became dedicated to political and social issues in Latin America; the zenith of his engagement with Latin American cultural themes can be observed in his *El Mediterano y el Verbo Americas* series produced in the mid-1980s, which feature paintings and poems illustrating the similarities between Latin American and European cultural renaissances. A later work from the series, *A cena con Agatone* (1985) is included in this exhibition.

Prominent early works also displayed include *Inscape* (1943) and *Children's Fear of Idols* (1943) from his *Inscapes* series (also known as *Psychological Morphologies*). In these works, as well as other works from the 1940s and 1950s, Matta started to develop a visual language of his own. *Psychological Morphologies* suggests an exploration into an alternative reality which depicts its own space and time. It also presents the artistic expression of the internal psyche as a landscape; exploring the subconscious mind as well as revealing the mysteries which lie in the idiom of the psychoanalytic visual formation of the super-ego in a three-dimensional space.

The series also makes use of techniques and concepts that older members of the Surrealist group such as Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy and Max Ernst used in their paintings, as well as encapsulating the practice of automatic painting, in which the work was created through an unconscious movement of the brush. Furthermore, Matta found himself interested in spaces whose forms were drawn from non-Euclidian geometry as well as the idea of how these could be penetrated. Matta intended to represent the immaterial existence of the psyche onto these works through the use of visual metaphors, which encompass his mental landscape.

In the *Inscape* series, Matta employed a unique technique consisting of incorporating delicate washes of paint, which were applied and then removed, leaving a trace of colour. The whole process would create an intense rendering of space. Surrealist painter and friend Gordon Onslow-Ford, with whom Matta started to create his first paintings in 1938 explained that Matta placed blobs of bright coloured paint alongside one another across the blade of a palette knife to create an automatic gesture on the canvas. In unforeseeable manners, the colours

LONDON

38 DOVER STREET, W1S 4NL
TEL+442074091540

MILAN

VIA FONTANA 16, 20122
TEL+39028056179

ST.MORITZ

VIA SERLAS 35, CH-7500
TEL +41 81 833 34 36



ROBILANT+VOENA

would blend while leaving in some of his compositions abstract forms as well as more figurative and architectural forms.

Matta had his first solo exhibition at the Julian Levy Gallery in New York in 1940. During his life time he had nearly 400 solo exhibitions, which included a major retrospective at the MoMA in 1957 which travelled to the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis in 1957 and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston the following year. He also exhibited at the National Gallery (Berlin) in 1970, at the Royal Academy (London) in 1981 and at the Centre Pompidou (Paris) in 1985. An exhibition is also planned to take place at the Hermitage (St Petersburg) in 2018.



Inscape, 1943
Oil on canvas
54 x 66 cm / 21.3 x 26 in



Children's Fear of Idols, 1943
Oil on canvas
55.1 x 66 cm / 21.7 x 26 in

R+V

PRESS RELEASE

LONDON
38 DOVER STREET, W1S 4NL
TEL+442074091540

MILAN
VIA FONTANA 16, 20122
TEL+39028056179

ST.MORITZ
VIA SERLAS 35, CH-7500
TEL +41 81 833 34 36

art@robilantvoena.com / www.robilantvoena.com