Walter Benjamin's Dreams

Watercolors by Gemma Romero Goday

Museum of Jewish History

From October 25th, 2023 to January 31st, 2024



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Co-funded by the European Union

Presentation

The extensive work of Walter Benjamin (Berlin 1892-Portbou 1940) also includes, in a scattered manner, annotations, descriptions and references to his dream world. He names recurring images such as the moon, the waves, the women and many others.

The scholar Burkhardt Lindner brought together all these references in a publication for the first time in 2008. This compilation was the inspiration for Gemma Romero Goday to pay tribute to the German philosopher through an original artistic interpretation that uses the watercolor technique and, sometimes, combines it with collage.

This exhibition brings together twenty-one plastic poems, all created in Portbou in 2018, in which Benjamin's words are transposed into images. Shadows, night landscapes, some human figures and, almost always, the moon are there.

"Both in 'real' life and in dreams, Benjamin was a modern *flâneur* who walked, absorbed in the moonlight, through modern cities like Berlin or Paris, analyzing with unexpected depth the new world he perceived there."

Gonçal Mayos i Solsona
Philosopher, essayist and professor at the University of Barcelona

"The works of Gemma Romero Goday echo the oneirism of Walter Benjamin and all those experiences, situations and moments that have been repressed, desired, forgotten, remembered, sensed... by the mysterious power of a dream, perhaps and sometimes a simile of Art."

Blanca Sala Reig
PhD in Art

Walter Benjamin's dream world

By chance, I learned about Walter Benjamin's dreams, and I thought it would be a challenge to pay him this tribute. I knew that his work and his thought were complex and difficult to understand, and I suspected that his dreams would be even more so.

By reading them, however, I easily entered their world and the elements that shape it. Images such as the moon and its influx, sea and waves, night and darkness, wind and vertigo, ghosts and women.

Walter Benjamin pondered *even* what he dreamed. He incorporated it in his works and diaries, and in his private correspondence to his friends. For this reason his dreams are scattered and difficult to locate in his extensive work.

To reflect these dreams I have chosen watercolor as a technique for its transparency, subtlety and freedom in gesture.

The poetics of water, together with color and collage elements, have allowed me to express feelings, enigmas, emotions, describe places and characters to convey the mystery of the dream world of the German thinker.

Gemma Romero Goday

About the author

Gemma Romero Goday lives and works in Portbou. Born in Barcelona in 1953 due to the work of her parents, both from Colera, she identifies herself as a native of Portbou. She has studied Plastic Arts with the painter Martínez Lozano, in Llançà, and at The Llotja School of Fine Arts in Barcelona. She is a member of the Royal Artistic Circle of Barcelona, also of the Group of Watercolorists of Girona, and the Collective of Painters of Portbou.

Her choice for watercolor has led her to create a work of climates and great depth. Her pieces hint at figures and scenes that evoke plural worlds. She has exhibited in France, Madrid, Barcelona and Girona, among other Catalan cities.

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Curation
Friends of the Girona Art Museum

Production
Museum of Jewish History, Patronat Call de Girona

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Assumpció Hosta

Direction of Museum of Jewish History
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DL Gi 1327-2023

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