

# MAX ERNST & JOAQUÍN FERRER

EN

## LES SURPRISES DU HASARD

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GALLERIA CONTINUA is delighted to present *Les surprises du hasard* (*The surprises of chance*), an unprecedented dialogue between Max Ernst and Joaquín Ferrer – two major figures born on opposite sides of the Atlantic, whose deep intellectual and artistic friendship has long remained largely unknown. Ernst played a significant role in supporting Ferrer shortly after his arrival in France in the 1960s. Coinciding with Paris' spring art week, this unique encounter unfolds within the gallery's space in the heart of the Matignon district.

*Les surprises du hasard* was the title of a 1971 exhibition at Galerie Alphonse Chave in Vence, showcasing a series of Max Ernst's lithographs—45 compositions born entirely from chance, as the artist himself described in the catalog. It was this same stroke of luck that sparked the friendship between Max Ernst and Joaquín Ferrer – a meeting that was unexpected yet instantly felt meant to be. The two artists first met in 1967 over lunch at the home of poet and writer Alain Bosquet. At the time, Ernst was already a celebrated artist, while Ferrer was a young painter who had arrived in Paris in 1960 on a Cuban government scholarship. From their very first encounter, Ernst was struck by the power of Ferrer's drawings and paintings – so much so that he found them reassuring.

To him, it seemed that in a contemporary art scene increasingly driven by sensation and media hype, there were still artistic approaches seeking their own path away from the noise of the world. He saw Ferrer's enigmatic, abstract, and biomorphic compositions – bathed in delicate pastel tones and rooted in the expansive orbit of Surrealism – as profoundly authentic. Fascinated, Max Ernst immediately acquired several works by the young Cuban artist. Once displayed in his apartment on Rue de Lille, they quickly caught the attention

of his visitors. Among them were Nina and Robert Lebel, who took an interest in Ferrer – whom Ernst described as “a bit of [his] own discovery.” His gallerist, Jean Hugues, was also intrigued and insisted on meeting him. Ernst wasted no time sharing the news: “Jean Hugues ('Le Point Cardinal') will come to see you. He's very enthusiastic. (...) If possible, come by my place Sunday morning around 11 for some advice.”

The following year, in 1968, Ferrer held his first exhibition at Galerie Le Point Cardinal. Naturally, Max Ernst lent his support, contributing a collage as a preface to the exhibition catalog: “Preface Portrait of Joaquín Ferrer as a Seven-Year-Old Poet.”

This humorous composition depicts a young schoolboy in a classroom, his gaze fixed on the floor. A crying little girl rubs her eyes, while in front of them, a teacher leans toward the boy with a stern expression, his hands crossed behind his back. Behind the children, a policeman with firmly planted legs seems to block any exit, while in the foreground, a giant fork lies on the floor, as if to remind us of the existence of worlds, proportions, and relationships that children may be the only ones able to see.

The title references Arthur Rimbaud's poem *Les Poètes de sept ans* (1871), a key figure in Surrealism who heralded a new poetic and artistic era. Rimbaud's call to “Changer la vie” became a central tenet of Surrealism, which aimed to revolutionize both art and existence by reconnecting with childhood and breaking free from the constraints of reason. Max Ernst saw in Joaquín Ferrer a painter capable not only of forging new paths for art but also of taking the poetic energy of Surrealism to new horizons.

Julia Drost

## Joaquín Ferrer and GALLERIA CONTINUA: A Meeting Through Time

Since the 2000s, the city of Manzanillo in Cuba has seen the rise of a new generation of Cuban artists, including Alejandro Campins and José Yaque, who are now represented by GALLERIA CONTINUA. Both share a deep admiration for Joaquín Ferrer, a major figure in Cuban art who, originally from Manzanillo, lived in Paris for many years before his passing.

In 2021, curator, Laura Salas Redondo, had the opportunity to meet Joaquín Ferrer thanks to the curator Carlos Escala. This meeting also allowed Alejandro Campins to connect with Ferrer, further revealing the deep admiration contemporary Cuban artists have for him. This encounter marked the beginning of an important artistic dialogue.

In 2024, curators Laura Salas Redondo and Niurma Pérez Zerpas showcased a broad selection of Joaquín Ferrer's works in the exhibition *Kaleidoscopes - Cuba: Contemporary Perspectives* at GALLERIA CONTINUA/Les Moulins. This event highlighted Ferrer's artistic legacy, carried forward by his sole heir, Christiane Ferrer, while also shedding light on his friendship with Max Ernst.

This meeting led to the idea of a dedicated exhibition, aimed at honoring the artist and celebrating the influence of his work in the landscape of contemporary art.

À propos des artistes :

**Max Ernst** (Brühl, 1891 - Paris, 1976) was a German painter who later became an American and then a French citizen. Associated with the Dada movement and later Surrealism, Ernst embraced a playful, imaginative approach throughout his work. Constantly exploring new artistic movements, his style evolved quickly from the expressionism of his early paintings to becoming a significant figure in Surrealism. He invented several new techniques, such as frottage and collage-novel, and developed a dreamlike, metaphysical painting style. As an inventive sculptor, Ernst created a unique universe filled with hybrid characters. His work freely reinterprets mythological sources, deconstructing and reassembling them through a visual language that blends the unconscious, archaic memories, and dreamlike visions, opening up new possibilities for thought.

**Joaquín Ferrer** (Manzanillo, 1928 - Paris, 2022) was a painter renowned for his unique style, blending geometric abstraction with lyrical abstraction. Born in Manzanillo, Cuba, he studied at the School of Fine Arts in Havana before moving to Paris in 1960 on a government scholarship, where he would spend most of his life. Influenced by Surrealism, Constructivism, and pre-Columbian art, Ferrer developed a universe that invites an inner journey toward the sublime. His work is distinctive and authentic, combining artistic sensitivity, subtlety, and formal rigor, with a masterful play of rhythm and light through

his imaginary, dreamlike, mystical, and poetic alphabet. In addition to his painting, Joaquín Ferrer created a significant body of work as a printmaker, illustrating many books by poets and writers. He has been featured in exhibitions at major institutions and galleries around the world, including the National Museum of Fine Arts of Cuba, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Caracas, the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, the Denise René Gallery in Paris, the Art Museum of the Americas in Washington D.C., and the Maison de l'Amérique Latine in Paris. Ferrer is considered one of the key figures in 20th-century Latin American abstraction.

This exhibition is presented in collaboration with the **Nahmad Collection**, along with **Christiane Ferrer** and **Aïa Ferrer**, co-founders of the Association of Friends of Joaquín Ferrer.

About the Association of Friends of Joaquín Ferrer:

The Association of Friends of Joaquín Ferrer was founded in 2018 and is supported by a scientific committee of art experts. Its mission is to promote the artist's work through exhibitions and the publication of a catalogue raisonné.

About the Gallery:

**GALLERIA CONTINUA** is a contemporary art gallery founded in 1990 in San Gimignano by three friends—Mario Cristiani, Lorenzo Fiaschi, and Maurizio Rigillo—today it operates in San Gimignano, Rome, Beijing, Paris, Les Moulins, Havana and São Paulo.

**GALLERIA CONTINUA** represents a desire to create, through art, a continuity between eras, enhancing the connection between past, present, and future, with a commitment to actively contributing to the writing of the contemporary art scene. Investing in unique, historically infused spaces, often far from conventional ideals, the gallery has developed a strong identity over more than thirty years of activity, embracing themes related to creation and cultural blending. Its various global locations foster encounters and exchanges centered around works of art, presenting a vision of beauty that is pluralistic, joyful, cosmopolitan, and rich in diverse influences.

In 2024, the gallery inaugurates a third French space in the heart of Matignon, the historic epicenter of the art market and a lively neighborhood in western Paris where important international contemporary art galleries, modern art dealers, and iconic fashion, craft, and lifestyle houses come together, attracting visitors from all over the world.

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