

# Marlborough

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## Miquel Barceló: *Elefandret Sculpture at Union Square, New York City*

Marlborough Gallery is pleased to announce that the monumental sculpture *Gran Elefandret*, 2008, by renowned artist Miquel Barceló will be on view at the Union Square Triangle beginning September 13, 2011 through the end of May 2012. It is with great pleasure that the Gallery brings this monumental bronze sculpture to Union Square, a place that epitomizes New York's unrivaled energy and serves as both a transportation and cultural bridge between uptown and downtown Manhattan. Barceló's immense *Gran Elefandret*, balances upright on its trunk, its four massive legs outspread searching for equilibrium. At twenty-six feet tall the sculpture brilliantly portrays an extraordinary, if not impossible physical and cultural feat; this contemporary monument believably captures with humor, scale and Spanish courage the essence of what a public monument can be today.

To further communicate the gravity-defying feat beyond the surprisingly slim trunk and large body, Barceló imparts the mass and weight of the creature through the downward sag of the heavily wrinkled skin, the off-kilter positioning of the huge legs, and the complete overturning of the floppy ears. The highly textured surface of the elephant recalls the artist's tactile paintings, in which he creates rich topographic, sculpted surfaces on canvas.

Nature plays an important role in Barceló's work, both thematically and functionally. At the start of his career the artist experimented with leaving large quantities of paint on a canvas to be weathered by the elements, and later incorporated materials from the environment in his paintings, such as sediment, seaweed, and volcanic ash. Having grown up on an island, many of his works reference the sea, and after extensive time spent in West Africa, depictions of the Mali landscape and the Niger River became prominent. Barceló's use of zoomorphic figures spans his entire career in both painting and sculpture. The art critic Dore Ashton wrote, "He had always been unusually attuned to the lifecycles of all kinds of creatures, ranging from fish in his Majorcan childhood to the farm animals he helped to slaughter... When he painted on the shores of the Niger River, he did not omit the animals that were so much a part of life in Mali...but he also, as always, interested himself in their fates. The subject of death and mortal decay was never very far from Barceló's thoughts."

Miquel Barceló was born in Mallorca in 1957. After studying briefly at the Arts and Crafts School of Palma and the Fine Arts School of Barcelona, he became involved with the conceptualist group *Taller Lluàtic* which opposed the stagnation of both the socio-political climate of Spain during the late 1970's and the "official" art scene. Originally focusing on painting, Barceló worked at first in a non-representational style, influenced by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Cy Twombly. As his career progressed, he began to integrate figurative elements in his paintings, and started creating sculptures, working with ceramics at first and then incorporating bronze. The artist collaborates with the Fundación Vicente Ferrer and the Eyes of the World Foundation and participates in projects for Sahrawi refugee camps. He divides his time between Paris, Mallorca, and Mali.

Barceló has exhibited worldwide at many renowned institutions and venues including: 16th Sao Paulo Biennale, 1981; Documenta Kassel VII, 1982; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, 1985; Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, 1995; Galerie Nationale Jeu de Paume and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1996; Museo d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 1998; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 1999; Musée de Louvre, Paris, 2004; Museum of Contemporary Art of Monterrey, Mexico, 2005; Rufino Tamayo Museum, Mexico, 2005; Museo d'Arte Moderna, Lugano, 2006; Longhouse Reserve, New York, 2007; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2008; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Málaga, 2008; 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009; CaixaForum, Madrid and Barcelona, 2010.

The many prestigious awards the artist has earned include the Spanish Ministry of Culture's National Visual Arts Prize, 1986; the National Visual Arts Prize of Catalonia, 1999; the Government of the Balearic Islands' Gold Medal, 2000; the Spanish Government's Prince of Asturias Arts Prize, 2003; and the Sorolla Prize from the Hispanic Society of America in New York, 2007.

Barceló's public commissions include large-scale sculptural installations in the Chapel of Saint Peter in the Cathedral of Palma de Mallorca and the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva.

Union Square Partnership Executive Director Jennifer Falk reports that "with thousands of visitors daily, Union Square is one of the busiest public art galleries in the world, and our 'Art in the Park' program reaches new heights with the installation of Miquel Barceló's monumental sculpture *Gran Elefandret*, in the park's triangle; we are proud that Marlborough Gallery has chosen Union Square Park as the backdrop for this incredible feat of engineering. *Gran Elefandret* is a reflection of the energy in this neighborhood and we look forward to seeing visitors' reactions to the sculpture as they create their own unique experience in Union Square."

The Union Square Partnership (USP) is a private, not-for-profit community-based organization responsible for the revitalization of the 14th Street-Union Square neighborhood. USP's mission is to improve the quality-of-life for the district's residents, businesses and visitors, by providing public safety, sanitation, marketing and business development services, as well as investing in the beautification and maintenance of Union Square Park. USP also conducts a host of free events for the public, including volunteer days, networking opportunities and "Summer in the Square," an weekly event series in the park. For more information, visit [unionsquarenyc.org](http://unionsquarenyc.org).

The City of New York's Department of Parks & Recreation Public Art Program has consistently fostered the creation and installation of temporary public art in parks throughout the five boroughs. Since 1967, collaborations with arts organizations and artists have produced hundreds of public art projects in New York City parks.

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