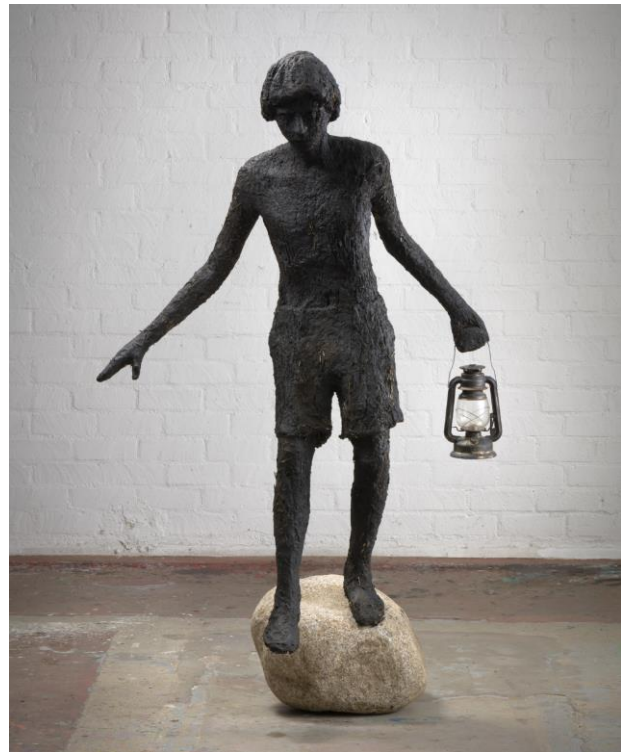


USC Fisher Museum of Art Presents

Enrique Martínez Celaya
SEA SKY LAND: towards a map of everything
January 19 – April 9, 2022



Images L-R: Enrique Martínez Celaya, *The Faithful*, 2019. Oil and wax on canvas. 150 × 116 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Miles McEnery Gallery, New York; Enrique Martínez Celaya, *The Step*, 2017. Dirt, tar, straw, stone, and metal. 75 × 52 × 35 inches. Collection of Bianca and Stuart Roden, London.

USC Fisher Museum of Art presents *Enrique Martínez Celaya, SEA SKY LAND: towards a map of everything*. *SEA SKY LAND* brings together approximately 30 large-format paintings and sculptures created by the artist between 2005 and 2020. While Martínez Celaya has had numerous museum and gallery exhibitions worldwide over the last two decades, this is the first time the arc of his practice will be revealed in a Southern California museum since 2001.

Martínez Celaya's philosophical and poetic probing in writings plays an integral part in his artistic practice. Together these works suggest a map of sorts, and this artistic, poetic, and intellectual mapping reveals a territory shaped by self, time, memory, meaning, myth, ideations of home, and the world as it is. Each of the three galleries at the Fisher Museum will present the artist's writings alongside paintings and sculptures dedicated to one of three motifs—sea, sky, and land.

The first gallery the public encounters when stepping into the exhibition is SKY. In the sculpture *The Step* (2017), made of dirt, tar, straw, stone, and metal, a young man cautiously steps forward carrying a

lantern, reflecting the idea of beginnings and journeys, a central concept of the exhibition. It will be the first work of art the public encounters when entering the exhibition.

One of the larger paintings in the exhibition, *The Faithful* (2019), depicts a full moon in the night sky shining down on flowering roses and butterflies gleaming in the moonlight. It reflects the mystery and tension between the sublime sky's epic scale and the smaller scale of our lives, especially our loves. The relationship between the two scales creates a friction that shapes our understanding of destiny and identity.

The painting *The Tunnel and the Light (For the Ones Who Hope to Come Out Someday)*, 2012, with its allusions to Søren Kierkegaard, Robert Frost, and Harry Martinson, points to Martínez Celaya's abiding interest in philosophy and literature, particularly poetry, while it embodies the crossing of an essential threshold.



Enrique Martínez Celaya, *The Generations' Keeper*, 2018.
Oil and wax on canvas with wood and metal. 92 × 118 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and Miles McEnery Gallery, New York

The artist's poetic mind drew from Herman Melville as he developed his mapping process, embodying an existential journey not unlike that of Melville's protagonist Ahab. The phrase *laugh at the ideals* hangs over the gray and empty ocean in Martínez Celaya's painting *The Generations' Keeper* (2018), one of the mysterious works in which the sea figures metaphorically, as that which facilitates a journey while threatening to swallow us up.

The painting *El otro muelle (The Other Dock)*, 2013, is central to the gallery dedicated to the SEA motif. The work is also the most unambiguously autobiographical piece in the exhibition, as it references

departures, memory, and longing. It embodies the artist's decision to leave his family to study in the United States, showing the two brothers left behind on the boards of a rotting pier.

The Crown (2010), a painting on loan from The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, shows a vulnerable adolescent king uncomfortably wearing a crown and an oversized robe wandering alone in a forbidding winter landscape. It is full of fairytale allusions as well as a fleeting sense of the boy king being on the threshold of loss, as his eyes are red-rimmed and full of tears. It is especially poignant as a reflection of the exilic imagination and its longing for home and makes a strong presence in the gallery dedicated to LAND.

Martínez Celaya's practice presumes that art is not only a cultural pursuit but also an ethical effort that aims to better understand and be engaged with the world and ourselves.

SEA SKY LAND: towards a map of everything is organized by curator Susan M. Anderson. The exhibition is accompanied by a 192-page publication produced and published by Hatje Cantz Verlag in Berlin and will be distributed internationally. The catalog includes contributions by Selma Holo, Director of USC Fisher Museum of Art from 1981 to 2021; Alexander Nemerov, Carl and Marilyn Thoma Provostial Professor in the Arts and Humanities, Stanford University; Elizabeth Prelinger, Keyser Family Professor of Art History, Georgetown University; Ed Schad, Curator and Publications Manager, The Broad; and Susan M. Anderson, Independent Curator and Art Historian; with poetry by Mark Irwin, Professor in the Department of English, University of Southern California; and David St. John, Chair of the Department of English, University of Southern California.

Concurrent with *SEA SKY LAND*, an exhibition of Martínez Celaya's work related to the early 20th-century California poet Robinson Jeffers will be on view in the Edward L. Doheny Jr. Memorial Library at USC, along with historical material by the poet. The exhibition draws from Martínez Celaya's recent residency at the Robinson Jeffers Tor House in Carmel, California, where he was invited to be the foundation's first Fellow. An expanded version of the Doheny Library exhibition will travel to the Monterey Museum of Art in May 2022.

Also concurrent with *SEA SKY LAND* is Martínez Celaya's immersive, site-specific installation, *There-bound*, on view at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California, where he is the institution's first Visual Arts Fellow. *There-bound* will be on view at The Huntington through November 2022.

About Enrique Martínez Celaya

Enrique Martínez Celaya is a contemporary Cuban-born artist, author, and former scientist whose work has been exhibited and collected by major institutions worldwide. Martínez Celaya is Provost Professor of Humanities and Arts at University of Southern California. He is a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College; a Fellow of the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens; a Fellow of Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities; and a Fellow of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation. He has realized major exhibitions, projects, interventions, and social and intellectual interactions not confined to museums and galleries, including the Berliner Philharmonie, Berlin, Germany; the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York; the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Germany; SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida; and the Strandverket Konsthall, Marstrand, Sweden, among many others. His work is held in over fifty public collections internationally, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford.

Martínez Celaya is the author of several books, including two volumes of his *Collected Writings and Interviews, 2010-2017* and (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020 and 2010); *The Nebraska Lectures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); *On Art and Mindfulness: Notes from the Anderson Ranch* (Los Angeles: Whale & Star Press, 2016); and *October* (Amsterdam: Cinubia Press, 2002). Martínez Celaya is the subject of several monographic publications including *Enrique Martínez Celaya and Käthe Kollwitz: Von den ersten und den letzten Dingen* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021); *Martínez Celaya, Work and Documents 1990-2015* (Santa Fe: Radius Books, 2016); *Enrique Martínez Celaya: Small Paintings 1974-2015* (Birmingham: Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, 2016); *Enrique Martínez Celaya: Working Methods* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 2012); and *Enrique Martínez Celaya, 1992-2000* (Köln: Wienand Verlag, 2002).

About the curator

Susan M. Anderson is an independent curator and art historian specializing in twentieth-century American art, with a focus on the art of California. A former Chief Curator at Laguna Art Museum, she has organized exhibitions and authored catalogues and essays on California art and culture for numerous regional museums. She earned her MA in art history and museum studies at USC.

About USC Fisher Museum of Art

Founded in 1939 by Elizabeth Holmes Fisher and accredited by the American Association of Museums, the museum houses a permanent collection of some 3,000 objects including 19th century American landscapes; 16th and 17th century Northern European paintings; 18th century British portraiture; and 19th century French Barbizon paintings, as well as 20th century works on paper, paintings and sculpture and features exhibitions of local, international, and emerging artists.

Located on the USC Campus in the heart of Los Angeles, the museum is part of an extraordinary complex of Exposition Park museums including the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the California Science Center, and the California African American Museum.

Museum hours:

Tuesday through Friday: 12pm to 5 pm

Saturday: 12pm to 4 pm

ADMISSION AND PROGRAMS ARE ALWAYS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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