



Exhibition «Cosmos. From Romanticism to the Avant-garde, 1801-2001»
17/06/1999 - 17/10/1999

*Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa, io non credea
Tornar ancor per uso a contemplarvi...*
(Giacomo Leopardi, Ricordanze)

Seen from below, the starry universe has always seemed endless, and the logic of its exploration has turned out to be an overwhelming task. As artists look skywards, proposing ways of depicting the vastness, they have sketched responses to the anxiety which grips us when faced with the immense. This exhibition is not just concerned with *figurations* of the cosmos, it does not make do with aligning planetary visions. It would be fairer to say that it is about the *imaginary of the infinite*, whose limits, which are impossible to find, are foretold by cosmic space. The project, conceived and presented by Jean Clair and his team is suspended from Ariadna's thread, between the romantic contemplation of the Moon, characteristic of the generation of Caspar David Friedrich, and the most recent images from NASA, through the extensions of the gaze presented by the panoramas of the major cities of the twentieth century, the monumental images of Church and Bierstadt devoted to natural American landscapes, metaphors for a frontier to be conquered, the floating cities which emerge from the imagination of the Russian constructivists, Miró's constellations, and many more. It is therefore not a question of setting out the conquests of science and the exploration of the cosmos. This project centres on the output of artists from different schools and proposes a series of metaphors for a visual frontier which the artists have pushed back in front of us, through their visionary inventiveness. At the dawn of the new millennium, the public of Barcelona is invited to reflect on two centuries of our modern artistic tradition, seen, in part, through the perspective of astronomy.

This exhibition is the result of a collaboration between the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the CCCB. Some of the works featured will be on show at the Palazzo de Grassi in Venice, the third venue for the exhibition. The cultural capital of Quebec and the capital of Catalonia are presently united by this joint look at the art of an era which has completed the passage of a closed world to an infinite universe. The finest cultural nuances of both cities are found in the vocation of universality this exhibition represents.

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