

1994

Daniel Serra-Badué: Dreamt Reality

University of Richmond Museums

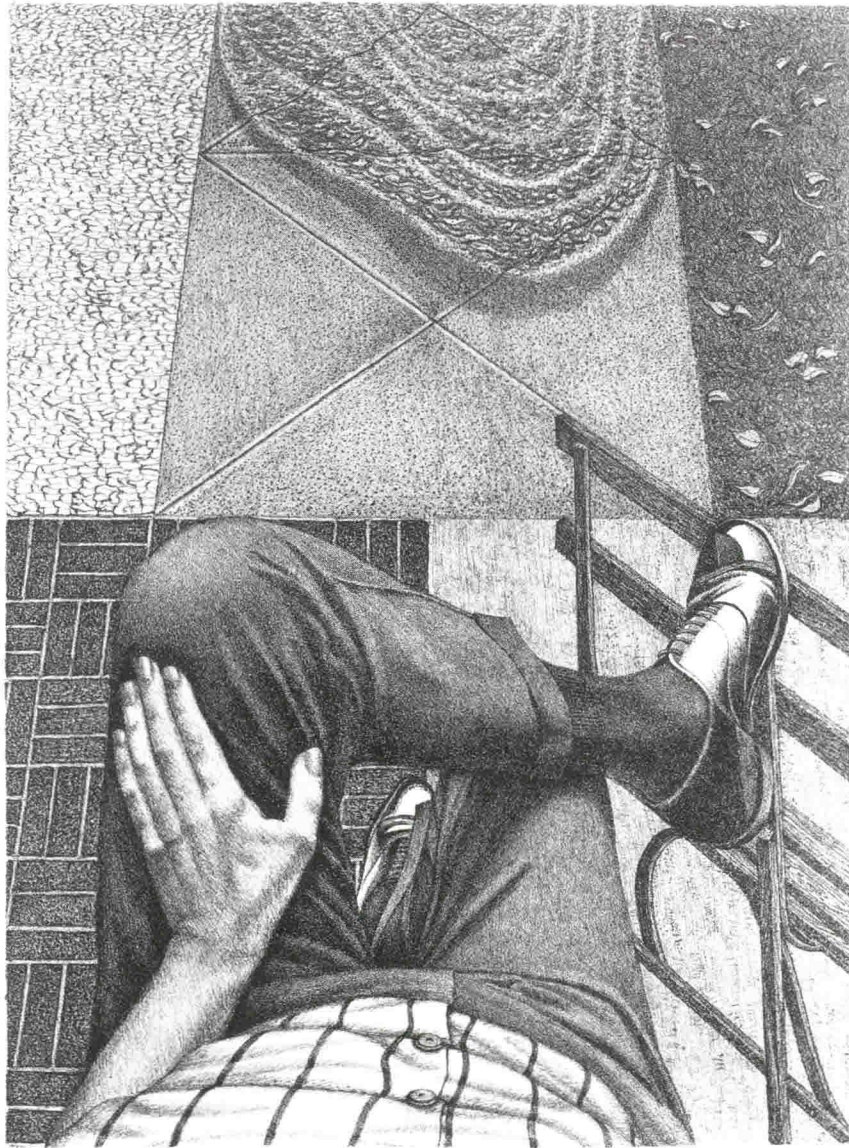
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Daniel Serra-Badué

DREAMT REALITY

DANIEL SERRA-BADUÉ: *DREAMT REALITY*

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ANIEL SERRA-BADUÉ is an artist of uncompromising vision who dwells upon memory as if it were tangible. "All that we see or seem / Is but a dream within a dream," wrote Edgar Allan Poe, and Serra-Badué seeks to place his audience within that dream. His evocative images

compel us toward experiences that combine described reality with surreal impossibilities and dreamlike remembrances. Serra-Badué's world is a world of dreamt reality.

The lithographs in this exhibition, ranging in date from 1964 to 1992, demonstrate Serra-Badué's mastery of clarity of line, exactitude of form, and precisely modulated tonality. The artist has stated, "The sobriety of this medium seems to reflect more accurately something that is more remembered than seen; it pretends to synthesize the context of tropical opulence in spare symbol of its existence. After all, a construction is always an anchor that helps find what we are in the receding tides of what we recall." Serra-Badué limits himself to a linear, monochromatic use of lithography in his carefully executed compositions. His approach heightens our awareness of the levels that lie just beneath the surface of things as they appear in the real world.

Serra-Badué was influenced by Surrealism early in his life, and he continues to find inspiration in the ideas first put forth by that art movement. The Surrealists were intrigued with depicting seemingly contradictory states of being, such as dreaming and waking, in images that went beyond reality, or were *sur-real*. Serra-Badué elegantly achieves this visual surrealism. His work puts the viewer into a real place, yet contrasting elements turn this place into an enigmatic world. Normal expectations are suspended by encounters with an imprisoned shopping bag, an impossible step, a newspaper about to be run over by a trolley, or a musical instrument attempting to fly to the moon. Dynamic shafts of light impose abstract forms

on realistic street scenes, breaking the illusion; decorative grillwork takes on an obsessive personality, revealing and simultaneously obscuring our view; shadows are as palpable as the objects they delineate. "Nothing is more surreal than reality," notes the artist. Serra-Badué reveals the mysterious and the sensuous in the realities that surround us every day.

Scenes of his birthplace, Santiago de Cuba, are a recurring theme in Serra-Badué's work; the city's architecture and atmosphere are redolent with memories of things past. Founded in 1514, Santiago is one of the oldest Spanish colonial cities in the New World. When Winslow Homer visited there in 1885, he wrote that Santiago "is certainly the richest field for an artist that I have ever seen," and he produced a beautiful series of watercolors depicting street scenes. The city remains a rich field for Serra-Badué as well, and we sense in these lithographs his love for the streets and houses of his youth.

For Daniel Serra-Badué, physical architecture holds "metaphysical levels that do not exclude but, on the contrary, make visible my central motivation for their realization; the desire of concretizing elusive remembrances." For us, his haunting images of human experience — whether dreamt reality or realized dreams — have an engaging surrealism that relentlessly draws us toward an inner reality.

Richard Waller

Director

Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond

Co-organized by the University of Richmond Marsh Art Gallery and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, the exhibition is traveling throughout the Commonwealth through the Virginia Museum's Department of Traveling Exhibitions and Media Services (Eileen Mott, Coordinator) following its venue at the Marsh Art Gallery (November 4 to December 16, 1994).

ABOUT THE ARTIST

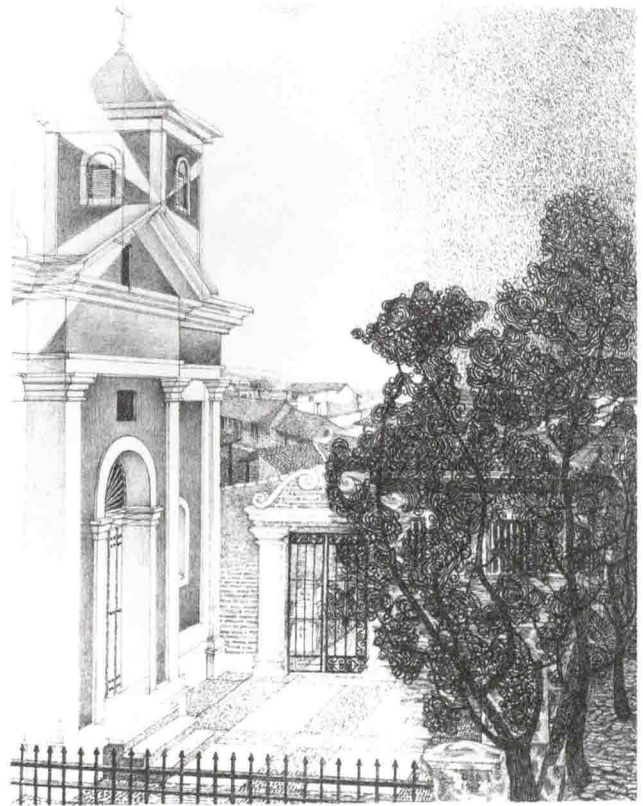
Daniel Serra-Badué was born in 1914 in Santiago de Cuba. His formal art education began there at the age of ten, at the Escuela Municipal de Bellas Artes. At the age of thirteen he came to the United States to study at the studio of the Catalán artist José Simont, and he was the youngest student ever to be admitted to the Art Students League in New York.

In 1929 he traveled to Spain to attend the studio of the Catalán artist Enrique Pascual Monturiol in Barcelona, and in 1930, he returned to his native country to finish his high school education and study at the studio of Hernández Giró. Two years later, he returned to Barcelona, where he resided when he again returned to Cuba in 1936. From 1938 to 1940 he lived in New York.

Serra-Badué received a Prix de Rome fellowship, but was unable to take advantage of it because of the outbreak of World War II. Instead he studied architecture for two years at the University of Havana. In 1959, he was the Assistant Director of Culture for the Ministry of Education in Cuba. After traveling the world for so many years, he established his permanent residence in New York in 1962.

Since Serra-Badué's first award, a Gold Medal at the 16th Annual Wanamaker Drawing Competition (held in 1928 in New York), he has received many other awards — from the American Society of Contemporary Artists, New York; the Bienal Hispano-Americana de Arte, Havana; the National Academy of Design, New York; the Painters and Sculptors Society of New Jersey; The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; and the Salon Nacional de Cuba, Havana. He has twice received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the Oscar B. Cintas Foundation.

Serra-Badué has exhibited in over thirty one-person exhibitions in Cuba, Mexico, Spain, and the United States, beginning with his first one-person show at the age of fifteen at the Galerias Layetanas, Barcelona, and his most recent at the Jersey City Museum. His work has been part of many group shows, both here and abroad, including exhibitions at such institutions as the Academia de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Cuba; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Brooklyn Museum; the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution, New York; the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Ibiza; the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art of Latin America, Washington, D.C.; the 1939 New York World's Fair; the Palacio de Bellas Artes,



Santa Lucia Church, Santiago de Cuba, 1967

Mexico City; The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; The Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; Sociedad de Artes y Letras Cubanas, Havana; the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio; and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

His works are included in the collections of many museums, including the Museo Municipal, Santiago de Cuba, and the Museo Nacional, Havana; the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany; the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, Madrid; the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Ibiza; the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, Switzerland; and The Brooklyn Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art, all in New York. Serra-Badué has taught at universities and schools in Cuba. While in the United States he has been on the faculties of The Brooklyn Museum Art School, Columbia University, Long Island University, and Pratt Institute. Today Serra-Badué lives in New York and continues his teaching as Professor Emeritus of Fine Art at Saint Peter's College, Jersey City.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

All the works are lithographs printed in black ink and signed in pencil by the artist and are from the collection of the artist. Dimensions of the image are in inches, height precedes width.

Patio

1964, 16 x 12 1/2

Hospital Street, Santiago de Cuba

1964, 12 1/4 x 15 3/4

Peace Tree, San Juan Hill

1964, 15 x 12 1/4

Museo Street, Santiago de Cuba

1964, 15 x 12 1/2

Fort, El Caney

1964, 12 1/4 x 15 3/4

Block-House, Santiago de Cuba

1964, 17 x 12 1/2

Cuban Town

1965, 12 x 15 1/2

Fort, San Juan Hill

1966, 13 1/2 x 16 1/2

Santa Ana Church, Santiago de Cuba

1967, 11 3/4 x 15 1/4

Santa Lucia Church, Santiago de Cuba

1967, 16 x 12 1/4

Colonial House, Santiago de Cuba

1968, 16 x 12 1/4

Tenement House, Santiago de Cuba

1969, 16 x 12 1/4

Summer Theater

1970, 11 3/4 x 17

Moonlit Balcony

1971, 16 x 12 1/4

Colonial Street, Santiago de Cuba

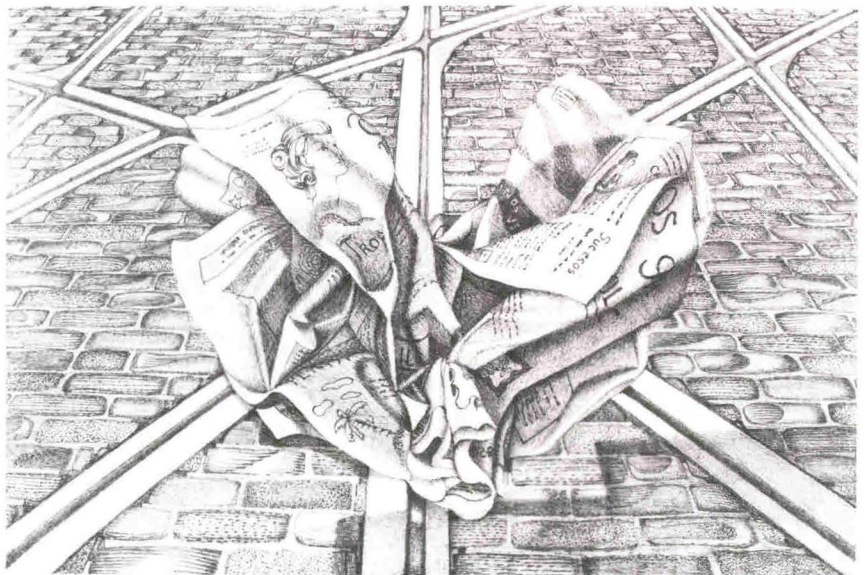
1972, 16 x 12 1/4

The Wall and the Flower

1973, 16 x 12 1/4

Self-Portrait at Age 48

1973, 9 x 10



Clamoring Newspaper, 1988

South Wind

1974, 16 x 12 1/2

Light and Shadow

1975, 12 x 16 1/2

The Letter

1976, 9 x 13 1/2

The Poet's House

1976, 16 x 12 1/4

Solitude

1977, 9 x 13 1/2

Morro Castle, Santiago de Cuba

1977, 12 x 16 1/2

West Light

1978, 12 x 16 1/2

Self-Portrait in the Park

1979, 13 x 9 1/2

Old Walls

1979, 12 x 16 1/2

The House on the Hill

1980, 12 x 16 1/2

Neoclassicist Composition

1981, 12 x 16 1/2

Imprisoned Shopping Bag

1982, 18 1/2 x 13 1/2

Exactitude I

1983, 12 1/2 x 19

Pineapple and Walnut

1984, 12 1/2 x 19

The Impossible Step

1985, 18 1/2 x 13

Musical Instrument in a Failing Attempt to Reach the Moon

1986, 12 1/2 x 19

Twenty-Five Years as a Lithographer

1987, 18 1/2 x 13

Clamoring Newspaper

1988, 12 1/2 x 19

1492, The Beginning

1992, 11 1/2 x 16

1492, The First Encounter

1992, 11 1/2 x 16

Cover: *Self-Portrait in the Park*, 1979

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