

## **Jose Manuel Fors**

### *Palimpsesto*

"Fors is an artist dazzled by objects. The objects are for him the forms, the colors, the textures, the lines; and also the affections, the memories, the family trace, the passing of time. His attitude towards objects reminds the refined and voracious collectors of mannerism, the chambre de merveilles, the cabinet of curiosities. He began at the end of the 70s as an active member of the group Volumen Uno. In 1981 he made the first version of Hojarasca, exhibited in the exhibition, Thirteen young artists. In it, he discusses the relationship between the natural and the created; about the element of nature and the artificial element; about the landscape and what was done by man. But this idea is not developed in the form of opposite poles or exclusive alternatives; On the contrary, we can breathe a poetic of coexistence, of the need and even of the beauty of that duality, which perhaps was no longer so. Hojarasca is a way of drawing attention to the changes that are taking place in the landscapes of technological culture, or a warning about the perennial and ultimately irrevocable imbrication of the eternal dilemma natura naturans, natura naturata. As of 1988, all Fors exhibitions are based on photography. With it, it has reached a remarkable artistic quality, with its magnificent murals of meticulous repetitions of trees, objects, or plots of all kinds. And although his artistic maturity is forever compromised with the art of the lens, Fors is still a creator where objects, textures, and material, are the real actors that unfold behind the camera. Behind the device, the real works of Fors take place, the arrangement of a universe of carefully selected forms, including chance, his designer skills, a deep material sensitivity, a spatial harmony with the materials, and a suggestive ability to change all texture into a symbol. It is those objects and the qualities that he discovers, those that have dictated the intimate and reflective parliaments about nature and time in his works, beyond pictorial, sculptural or photographic genres."

Corina Matamoros  
ART CRITIC AND CURATOR

### **About the artist**

Jose Manuel Fors was born in 1956 in Havana, Cuba. He attended the San Alejandro Academy and the Institute of Museology, both in Havana, Cuba.

Fors has exhibited internationally in the United States, Spain and Japan. His work can be found at the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles); The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston); The Museum of Fine Arts Havana and at Fundación Museo de Bellas Artes (Caracas, Venezuela)among others.

Fors was a member of the legendary Volumen I (Volume I), and participated in their first exhibition in 1981 with an installation. During the Eighties, Fors produced installations that were ground-breaking for the Cuban context, and these are perhaps his best known works. Working with natural materials, such as leaves, was a challenge at a time, when something like that was not generally considered art in his country. His installations and other works of this period leaned towards a more conceptual approach. Instead of the universal and trite symbols of time, Fors chose decadence, as a metaphoric image through his dried leaves accumulations to render the passage of time. This was the backbone of his first solo exhibition titled Acumulaciones (Accumulations) in 1983. In those early years, he was engaged in exploring the concept of the passage of time and the evocative power of memory, and these installations proved to be the ideal visual solutions.

His work has always revolved around memory in one way or another, either through his photographs or his installations. When he began to exhibit in the late Seventies, photography was far from being his technique of choice. He was trained as a painter and his excursions into photography began when he had to photograph some of his installations. He liked the effect and from then on photography became part of the creative process for him. In 2017, Fors received the National Prize of the Plastic Arts for the Work of a lifetime.