

Henri Michaux

Icebergs

18 January - 18 March 07

The exhibition includes a series of films and compositions of contemporary music inspired by life and work of Henri Michaux.

A catalogue of the exhibition entitled *Henri Michaux. Icebergs* has been published in Spanish by the Círculo de Bellas Artes, Madrid for the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo.

Seminar "Writing through Painting": art and poetry in the work of Henri Michaux
21 -22 February 07

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo

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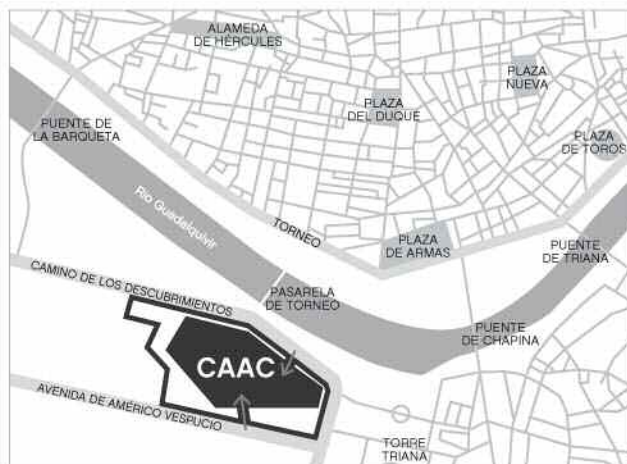
Timetable

1 October - 31 March
Tuesday to Friday: 10 - 20
Saturday: 11 - 20
Sunday: 10 - 15
Monday: Closed
Holidays: consult with centre

Access

Avda. Américo Vespucio nº 2
Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n
Transport
C1 and C2 buses

Tickets sales until 30 minutes before closing

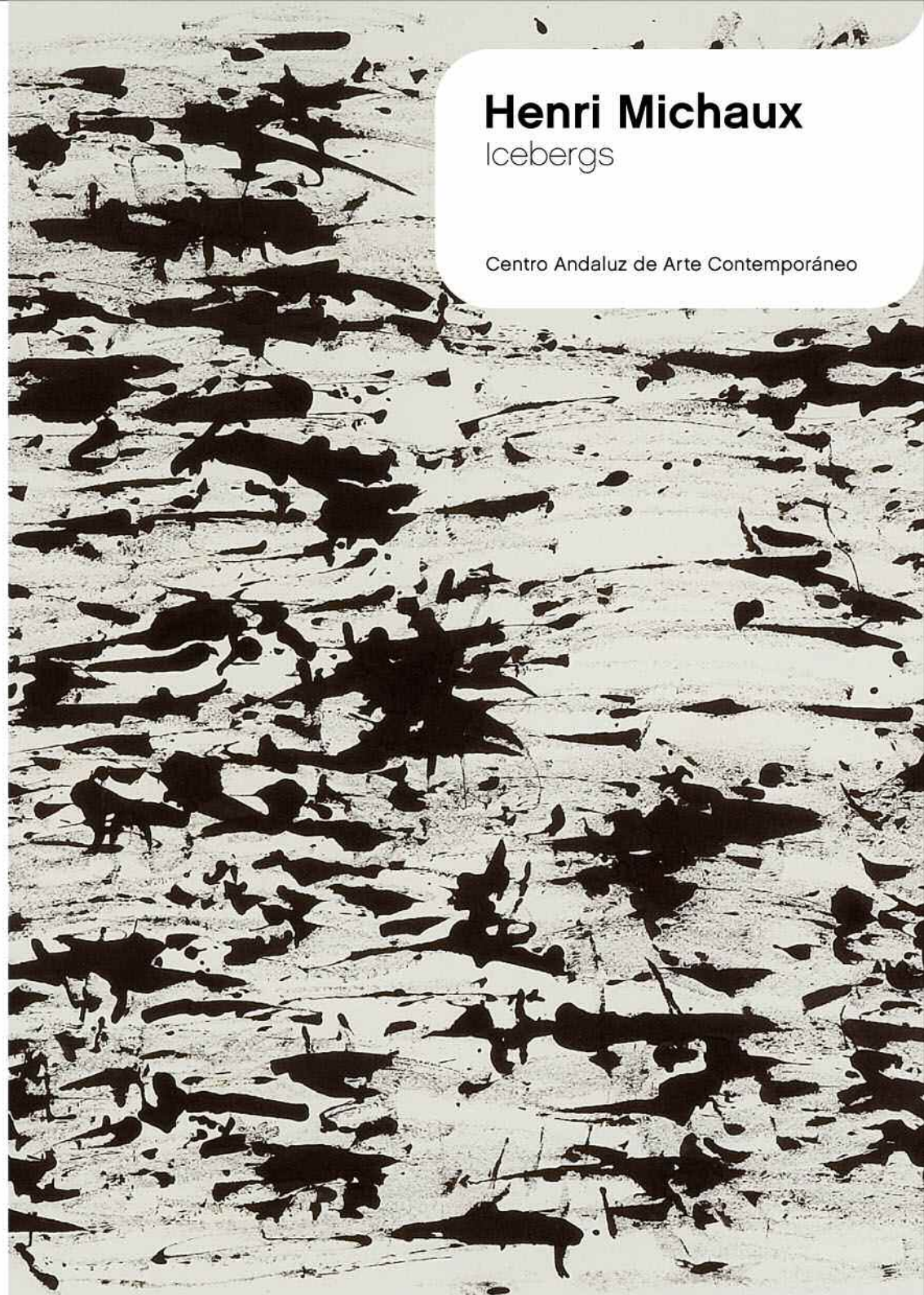


Cover: Henri Michaux. Untitled, 1960

Henri Michaux

Icebergs

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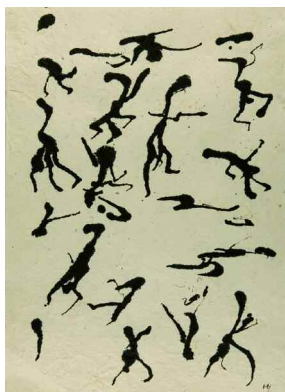


Henri Michaux

Icebergs



Untitled, 1981



Movements, 1959



Untitled, 1979

The exhibition *Henri Michaux. Icebergs* brings us the pictorial work of this Belgian author and painter who always felt strongly attracted by Oriental cultures and who made travel – both real and imaginary – a source of inspiration and central theme for his work. The exhibition takes its title from one of Henri Michaux's most overpowering poems and includes 160 graphic works, 67 books, 11 photographs, and 40 letters and manuscripts, in addition to a number of films and pieces of contemporary music. The aim of the exhibition is to explore some of the most significant motifs of this many-sided, enigmatic artist and reveal the close links between his poetic and his pictorial work.

Many writers paint and many painters write, but very few have been able to weld together both activities with such flow and intensity as Henri Michaux. In his case, painting and writing impregnated each other. "I paint as I write, to find myself, to rediscover myself", confessed Michaux. Both arts were the tools he used to weave a unique poetic universe that shows with fascination the rift separating reality from its representation. In this sense, Octavio Paz, in an essay included in the exhibition catalogue, describes Michaux as a visionary, one of those few exceptional beings that dare scorn the bridges man has invented to unite and separate the observing subject from the thing observed. Paz says that "to look with that gaze is to retrace one's steps, to go back to the end of all roads, to the origin which is that which grows more distant as we approach". Michaux understood aesthetic creation as a sort of ritual experience, an action which, through the repetition of certain gestures and movements, created a different time-scale, freed from the functional logic ruling everyday life. All of which he did in a tense, rapid, nervous style, as if shaken by electric currents, in short, agile phrases – energetic, rhythmic strokes. This search for a creation far from the limitations imposed by rational knowledge and its ordering logic led him to explore non-western cultures and to experiment with hallucinogenic substances.

Born in the Belgian city of Namur in 1899, Henri Michaux, did not make his first drawings and paintings until the early

1930's, although from his arrival in Paris in 1924 he showed great interest in the proposals of artists such as Paul Klee, Max Ernst or Giorgio de Chirico. In 1936 he published his first illustrated book *Entre centre et absence* and a year later had his first show at *Librairie de la Pleiade* art gallery in Paris. The same period also saw the appearance of his *Black backgrounds*, as well as his book *Peintures* that brought together a selection of his pictorial works up to that time.

Throughout the 1940's visual art became increasingly important in his work, in the form of watercolours and oil or acrylic paintings, pencil or ink drawings, engravings, *frottages* and *gouaches*. In 1946 he published *Peintures et dessins* in which 43 pictorial works were associated with the same number of fragments of texts taken from his literary work. In 1960 he was awarded the Einaudi Prize in the Venice Biennale and five years later the Museum of Modern Art in Paris held an important retrospective of his work. Since then numerous galleries and museums in Europe, America and even Japan have organised exhibitions of his pictorial creation which, despite its great technical quality and expressive power, continues to be much less well known than his literary work.

The voyage is a fundamental element in the work of Henri Michaux. At the age of just twenty, he gave up his medical studies and enrolled as a stoker on a French merchant vessel that took him to Brazil and Argentina. In 1924 he settled in Paris and published his first books. In 1927 he returned to South America and undertook a long, intense tour. The impressions of this trip were brought together as a fusion of report and chronicle with private diary and poetic essay in the book entitled *Ecuador. A Travel Journal*.

After spending 1930 and 1931 travelling through India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaysia, China, Korea and Japan, he wrote one of his best known works, *A Barbarian in Asia* (translated into Spanish by Jorge Luis Borges), which became the starting point for the long

and intense personal and artistic relationship he had with oriental culture. According to Andrés Sánchez Robayna, these were cultures that "for Michaux always represented both a passion and a powerful spiritual stimulus." Indeed, the influence of the East was decisive in the evolution of his creation, with visible effects on, for example, the ink drawings of *Movements*, most of his writings on painting or in books such as *Ideograms in China*.

Three other books – *Voyage en Grande Garabagne, Au pays de la magie* and *Ici, Poddema* – also deal with imaginary countries and territories, as too does *Meidosems: Poems and Lithographs*, which contains twelve beautiful engravings and is one of Michaux's works that best combines text and image. Finally, the texts and drawings produced under the effects of mescaline, LSD and other hallucinogens (experiences that found expression in books such as *Miserable Miracle. Mescaline, Infinite Turbulence or Light through Darkness*) could be called voyages into his own consciousness.

This exhibition focuses especially on a number of events and influences that shaped both the life and work of Henri Michaux, who died in Paris in 1984. It analyses, among others, the influence on Michaux's creative career of authors and artists such as Lautréamont, Giorgio de Chirico, Paul Klee or Max Ernst and the relations he established with personalities of the Hispanic cultural world such as Octavio Paz, Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Néstor Ibarra, González Bernal, Victoria and Angélica Ocampo, among others.

A catalogue has been published for the exhibition, including texts by the Madrid artist Eduardo Arroyo, the Cuban painter Jorge Camacho, the aforementioned writers Andrés Sánchez Robayna and Octavio Paz and by Juan Manuel Bonet, art critic and curator of the exhibition.