

# Idea: Painting-Force

## The hinge of the 1970s and 1980s

6 November 2013 - 18 May 2014

*Idea: Painting-Force* presents a set of works produced in Spain between the years 1978 and 1984, a historical period of profound social and cultural transformations. The exhibition looks at a specific situation of the Spanish artistic scene, in which the crisis of the avant-garde and of the idea of modernity becomes visible through the pictorial practice, understood as a territory for thought and the production of creative strategies, of the five artists represented: Alfonso Albacete, Miguel Ángel Campano, Ferran Garcia Sevilla, Juan Navarro Baldeweg and Manolo Quejido.

The exhibition is situated on the hinge between the seventies and eighties, a moment of crisis, in the deepest sense of the word, of the “modern project”. The analyses and redefinitions of models brought about by conceptual practices, among others, were the symptom, if not the cause, of a major shift in the aesthetic paradigm. The crisis, which emerged from a perception of the faultline between reality and ideological explanations of it, implied readdressing the concepts of the Academy and Tradition. Is another form of modernism possible?

These artists then turned their gaze, on the one hand, toward the *original agents* of the modern avant-garde, like Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso, and on the other toward their North American successors, such as De Kooning, Motherwell and Jasper Johns. However, they also looked toward other epochs (Poussin, Velázquez) and other cultures (India, North Africa), though not on the basis of mimetic norms or the modern demand for originality, but through a re-reading of the original processes that permitted a critical and displaced use of their procedures. Painting became an essay on painting itself. In transition and in tension, this was painting as

a system for the perception of thought processes. These artists saw painting at that moment as an event, though not as action painting, which is the expression of a prior subject, but as the process of construction of a subject.

It was not, as some may have understood or interpreted it at the time, a “return” to the “order” of the classical disciplines as a rejection of the artistic discourses of the seventies, nor was it a “return to painting” or to the aestheticist “pleasure of painting”. Rather, it was a *programmatic convergence* upon its practice.

During the years of newly-won democratic liberties in which the pieces presented in this exhibition were produced, the work of the five artists took place in a no man’s land, a fold in time, an artistic ambience that was enormously active but structurally weak, and soon went from inhabiting a formalist cultural milieu, acritical if not dogmatic, to embracing the market and the aesthetic of success.

The criterion for gathering them together in this exhibition is by no means their constitution of a group. The focus is the (post)conceptual affiliation of several of them, whose investigations were to converge on the practice of painting, their understanding that Tradition was not a closed conservative structure but an *energy supply* for contemporary work, and their common desire to reflect both analytically and passionately on the substantive matter of painting capable of surpassing the abstraction/figuration dichotomy, since the figurative here merely *anchors* the gaze upon the nature of things.

Opening the show is Juan Navarro Baldeweg’s 1976 installation *Interior V. Luz y metales* which provides a nexus with the conceptual languages investigated previously, and announces, in the artist’s own words, “the hunger for painting” which would initiate the slippage toward the pictorial practice that makes up most of the exhibition.

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Palacio de  
Velázquez  
Parque de El Retiro,  
28009 Madrid

**Opening Hours**  
From April  
to September  
Every day from  
10:00 a.m.  
to 10:00 p.m.  
From October  
to March  
Every day from  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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**Round table**  
November 15,  
6:00 p.m.  
Nouvel Building,  
Auditorium 200  
**Encounter. Idea:**  
**Painting-Force**

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