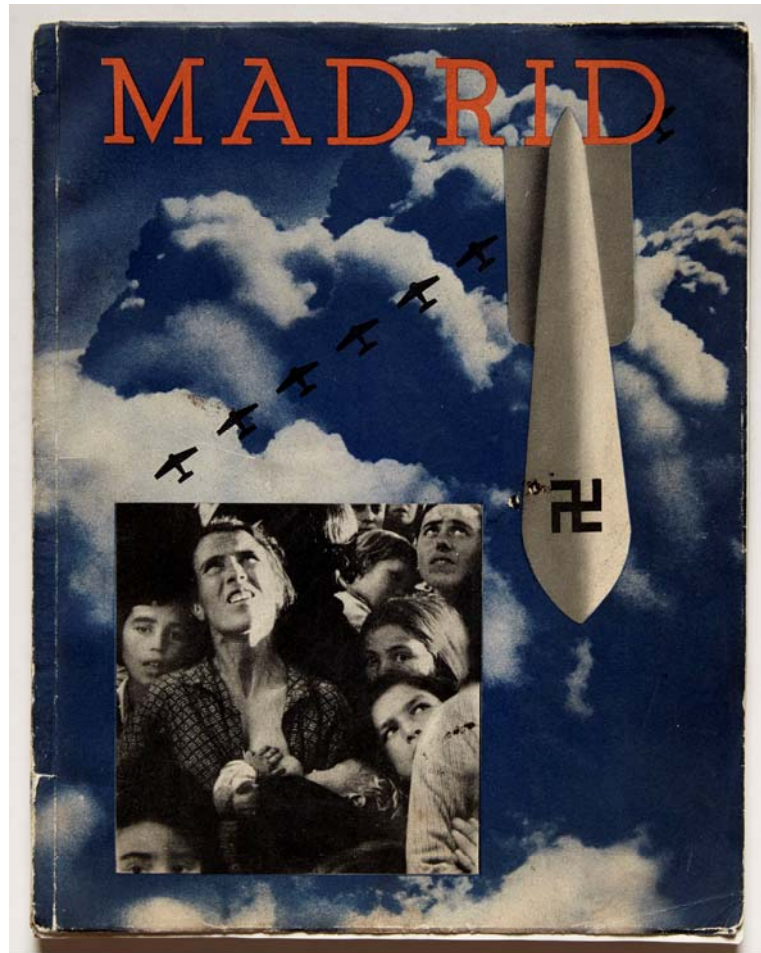


photobooks  
Spain 1905-1977



*Madrid.* Barcelona: Ediciones del Comissariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1937. 300x235 mm, 96 páginas, 100 fotografías, 3 fotomontajes.

- DATE:** 27th May 2014 – 5th January 2015
- PLACE:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain)  
Sabatini building, 4th floor
- ORGANISATION:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
and Acción Cultural Española (AC/E)
- CURATOR:** Horacio Fernández
- COORDINATION:** Concha Calvo and Almudena Díez

**photobooks. Spain 1905-1977** is a history of Spanish photography through a selection of its best photobooks, many of them little known. The exhibition, organized by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), is the **result of a line of acquisitions and research undertaken by the Museum's** Department of Collections with the collaboration of Horacio Fernández, curator of the exhibition.

This exhibition offers a new perspective on Spanish photography during its most important period through the work of photographers like **Luis Acosta Moro, Alfonso, Jalón Ángel, Antonio Cánovas, Robert Capa, Francesc Català-Roca, Colita, Joan Colom, José Compte, Salvador Costa, Ramón Masats, Xavier Miserachs, Misiones Pedagógicas, Fernando Nuño, Francisco Ontañón, José Ortiz Echagüe, Joaquín del Palacio, Enrique Palazuelo** and **Leopoldo Pomés**.

*photobooks. Spain 1905-1977* shows works published in Spain between 1905 and 1977—in different styles, in limited or mass editions, printed using refined techniques or on inexpensive paper, for all audiences or for minorities. They are about people, things, behaviors, and ideas. photobooks were few and far between at the start of the twentieth century, increased in number during the war, and reached their height of development in the sixties. They subsequently grew scarce, only to make a triumphal comeback in the new century, represented in the Museum's Library in the show **Books that are Photos, Photos that are Books**. Together they make up a specialized collection that is unique in its kind and embodies the Museo Reina Sofía's commitment to all aspects of photographic images.

The works on display, most of which are little known, provide a fresh insight into Spanish photography. *photobooks* probes the broad and suggestive relationships between photography, publishing, design and literature, popular art and culture, history and politics, and public and private life. In the pages of these works is a plural history of the profound transformation of Spanish society. Thanks to the collective work of photographers, publishers, designers and writers, the themes presented in *photobooks* include the image of woman, seen from perspectives as different as the submission to patriarchal culture in the works of Cánovas and Compte and the militant feminism of Colita. Another major topic is the representation of the Spanish Civil War from both sides, with books like *Madrid*, which deals with the victims of the bombings during the siege of the capital, contrasting with Jalón Ángel's portraits of soldiers on the side of the uprising. The war is followed by the sadness and harshness of the dictatorship, shown in photobooks by Joaquín del Palacio and Alfonso.

The relationship between photography and literature emerges throughout the exhibition, starting with the book by Cánovas mentioned above. From the period of the Civil War, special attention is merited by the photobooks of Antonio Machado, Miguel Hernández and Arturo Barea. In the sixties, the Lumen publishing house brought out the *Palabra e Imagen* (Word and Image) collection, designed by Oscar Tusquets, with extraordinary contributions by writers like Aldecoa, Cela, Delibes, Vargas Llosa and Caballero Bonald, and photographers like Masats, Maspons, Miserachs and Colita. One outstanding work

in this section is *Nuevas escenas matritenses* (New Scenes of Madrid), with photos by Enrique Palazuelo.

Urban culture is also present in the photobooks of Alfonso, Català- Roca, Miserachs and Ontañón. Mention should be made too of the books on the end of the dictatorship by Nuño and the Diorama and Foto FAD teams, which show the gradual disappearance of the old identifying features of Spanish society under the influence of tourism and the global economy.

Apart from displaying some photographs autonomously, the show also features systems that allow visitors to view the plural content of each work exhibited, since it is in the work as a whole, as a coherent sequence of images, that the true entity of the photobook resides.

### The first Spanish photobooks

“What a history painter would have painted I photographed,” wrote Antonio Cánovas of *¡Quién supiera escribir!...* (If Only I Knew How to Write!...), his adaptation of a poem by Ramón de Campoamor about women’s dependence in a patriarchal world. Using actors and sets, Cánovas recreated a group of *tableaux vivants* or living pictures subtitled like films, which were as novel as photobooks in 1905. The photographic poem came out in two editions: one in postcards, which was a great commercial success; and a limited edition printed using the technique of the finest twentieth-century photobooks, photogravure.

José Ortiz Echagüe’s photobook *Spanische Köpfe*, later published as *España, tipos y trajes* (*Spain: Types and Costumes*), is the first instalment of an extensive photographic project to document folk culture by seeking out tradition. His aim was to preserve ways of life that were dying out; to show situations from the past: “In wandering through the little villages, I talk to the people, select models one by one, start the difficult task of dressing them in the typical garb.” The result was photographs that were chiefly aesthetic, close to the paintings of Sorolla or Zuloaga, but also political, as they visualized concepts (people, race, collective identity...) used by different ideologies.

With the *Misiones Pedagógicas* (Educational Missions), the Second Republic set out to bring urban life closer to the rural world through culture. The ‘missionaries’ were university students who took the theater, music, art, and the cinema to villages. Some of them, such as José Val del Omar and Guillermo Fernández, photographed the audiences, capturing shots that are devoid of local character. Instead of seeking references to the past, they hint at a better future represented by the people’s curious gazes: the photographs chosen for the photobook *Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas* (Educational Missions Trust) are intended to disseminate democratic values and confidence in progress.

## The both sides of the Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War was photogenic. Dozens of photographers engaged in documenting it. Media all over the world published images of the war, which were used by the both sides to convey their own virtues and the atrocities committed by their opponents.

The collective photobook *Madrid* is a visual account of the consequences of a siege: destruction, homeless people, the exodus of refugees. The effects of the bombings on the civilian population are captured in montages and photographs by Luis Lladó, Robert Capa, Hans Namuth, Chim, and Margaret Michaelis, among others. The faces of the child victims should be stressed—some appalling forensic photographs that were widely used in Republican propaganda and have been mentioned by Arturo Barea, Virginia Woolf, and Susan Sontag, among other writers.

A type of cultural propaganda characteristic of the Republican side was the publication of books combining words and pictures. Several came out during the war, among them *Madrid baluarte de nuestra guerra de independencia* (Madrid Bulwark of Our War of Independence), with texts by Antonio Machado; Miguel Hernández's book of poems *Viento del pueblo* (Winds of the People); and Arturo Barea's collection of stories titled *Valor y miedo* (Courage and Fear). All three feature photographs whose authorship is not credited, though we now know that they were taken by photographers such as Walter Reuter or designers such as Mauricio Amster.

The cult of personality was a salient feature of the Nationalist side's propaganda. In 1939 the rebel military were presented as serious and efficient technicians in Jalón Ángel's *Forjadores de imperio* (Empire Builders), a triumphal parade by no means epically portrayed and much less generous with the defeated. This collection of portraits of the men who had won a war was published in a luxury version designed to hang in public offices and in a popular version in postcard form for mass distribution.

The conservative values of the new fascist regime were conveyed in photographs. In *Mujeres de la Falange* (Women of the Falange, a collection of photographs by José Compte published in luxury magazines and as humble postcards) woman as mother, subordinate to man and an outsider to society and employment, was a compulsory role model, the only exception being that dictated by war itself, which required her to perform "heavy work with feminine grace for when the men return..."

## The postwar

The hardship of the postwar years is conveyed in a few photobooks that managed to slip past the censors. Literature with photos continued to be published in books such as *Momentos* (Moments), whose poems would be less sad without the ruins, deserted villages, and bare trees found in the photographs of Joaquín del Palacio (Kindel). *Rincones del Viejo Madrid* (Corners of Old Madrid), a collection of night shots by

Alfonso, is an expressionist photobook printed in the opaque tones of the finest photogravure work. Alfonso portrays the capital as yet another victim—a frozen and sinister backdrop as dead as its missing inhabitants.

The book of poems titled *Les fenêtres* (The Windows) features many closed windows that also resemble abstract paintings in Leopoldo Pomés's photos, which bring to mind a confined, stifling place. But in spite of everything, life carries on, as shown by the photos in *Barcelona*, the city of Francesc Català-Roca, who believed that "what words describe photography places on view": images found in the street, as alive as the people in the photos, in a pleasant urban photobook.

### The 60's: the golden decade of Spanish photography

**Palabra e Imagen** (Word and Image) was the creation of publisher Esther Tusquets and designer Oscar Tusquets. It was advertised by the Lumen publishing house as "a collection that is different from everything that has been done so far." Its books "are not art books, they are not photography books, they are not literary works," but "a new concept." They all have a theme "and the writers, the photographer and those who plan and produce the book work on it as a team." The aim was to present "an idea" using different means: "not just words but also the photography, the composition, the type of lettering, and the color of the paper can be used to express it."

**Palabra e Imagen** was Spain's main contribution to the history of photobooks. For fifteen years it was a laboratory for experimenting with different ways of publishing a collective work produced by writers, designers, photographers, and editors that attached equal importance to visual and textual readings—word and image.

The photographs are by Jaime Buesa, F. Català-Roca, Colita, Joan Colom, Julio Cortázar, Dick Frisell, Antonio Gálvez, Paolo Gasparini, Sergio Larrain, César Malet, Ramón Masats, Oriol Maspons, Xavier Miserachs, Francisco Ontañón, and Julio Ubiña. Prominent among the graphic designers, in addition to the collection's creator Oscar Tusquets, are Mariona Aguirre, José Bonet, Lluís Clotet, Toni Miserachs, and Enric Satué. Finally, the authors of the texts include writers such as Rafael Alberti, Ignacio Aldecoa, Carlos Barral, Juan Benet, José María Caballero Bonald, Alejo Carpentier, Cavafis, Camilo José Cela, Julio Cortázar, Miguel Delibes, Federico García Lorca, Alfonso Grosso, Ana María Matute, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Julián Ríos, and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Important photo-essays were published in the sixties, such as *Los Sanfermines* (The San Fermín Festivities) by Ramón Masats and *Barcelona blanc i negre* (Barcelona Black and White) by Xavier Miserachs, both of them masters of documentary photography. The first book was hailed as "the most personal photographic work that has been produced in Spain." It is a "story told in pictures" that shows the expressive possibilities of the photobook and to what extent "a still photograph is not sufficient for a photographer who pursues a narration." The second is a stroll through the streets of

Barcelona in search of its inhabitants, and is more interested in life than in history. It is a “book to look at” that attempts a difficult combination of the subjective humanist photography of the previous decade and the new international urban photography based on the model established by William Klein, a “highly original way of hinting at cities” without succumbing to commonplaces or picturesqueness.

Also by Miserachs is **Costa Brava Show**, a photobook based on the mass phenomenon of tourism and featuring black-and-white photos on subjects such as young people enjoying themselves, sexual liberation, and the consequences of economic progress: chaotic town planning, corruption, and loss of authenticity. An equally critical intention underlies the photobook **Vivir en Madrid** (Living in Madrid), which is documentary in content and experimental in form—both the text and the pictures. Francisco Ontañón’s distant, stark photographs are kind to the common folk and critical of the privileged classes, but always humorous.

**Nuevas escenas matritenses** (New Scenes of Madrid) is a collection of 63 urban tales written by Camilo José Cela based on street photographs by Enrique Palazuelo that show an “incredible Madrid, where time stood still, oblivious and forgotten.” Published in several formats (from low to high culture: popular weekly and literary review; in normal and bibliophile editions), it tells stories invented from documentary photographs—a literary procedure that has been dubbed the ‘Celian picture-story.’ The photos make possible “hearing with new ears, seeing with different eyes what we believed to have been seen and heard forever.”

Luis Acosta Moro believed that the book of the future would be “a poem of short words and great pictures” of the kind embodied by his photobook **Cabeza de muñeca** (Doll’s Head), a symbolic work that alludes, among other themes, to the Civil War and the image of women. The publisher regarded it as a new type of book, a “film-novel-artistic essay.” The main subject is the model featured in all the pictures, sometimes dancing (or wrestling) with the photobook’s absolute author, who was responsible for everything: photographs, design, and text.

### The 70’s: the last auteur photobooks

**Los últimos días de Franco** (The Last Days of Franco) is a photobook that is unique in both form and content: the funeral rites of the dictator. Live history is fleeting and the propaganda chiefs needed an official history capable of preserving “the living warmth of memories.” To achieve this, Fernando Nuño photographed videos. The result was a photobook consisting of television images that were second-hand but equally or more documentary than the original reports. “As they have been reproduced from video, [the photos] have the quality of a living document,” explains the book, a visual account that is completed with a second volume titled **Los primeros días del Rey** (The First Days of the King).

The second half of the seventies witnessed the transition to democracy, a highly politicized period in Spain. Two photobooks, *Pintadas del referendum* (Graffiti on the Referendum) and *Pintades Pintadas* (Graffiti), compile the propaganda of the day, in this case in the form of street graffiti—a subject also dealt with in French and Portuguese publications. The aim is to preserve the graffiti “as a necessary testament to and document of the vicissitudes of a people in pursuit of their future.” The authors are two short-lived groups of photographers, Equipo Diorama of Madrid and the Barcelona-based Foto Fad.

The photobook *Punk* is pioneering in its portrayal of an international popular culture phenomenon. In Salvador Costa’s photographs taken from “close up and above the subject,” the scene is less important than the audience featured in the shots of ultra-modern people, clothing, and rituals captured by the photographer, who was lucky enough to find a publisher capable of discovering more than just another short-lived fad in his photos.

Photographer Colita and writer Maria Aurèlia Capmany, collaborators on the *Vindicación feminista* magazine, are the authors of *Antifémima* (Antifemale), a photobook that set out to portray a type of woman “no one wants to look at” but who “is genuine and real, who is not twenty years old, who is not pretty.” To achieve this, Colita selected photos from her archives on themes such as old age, marriage, work, religion, prostitution, the body, marginalization, advertising, fashion, and the practice of making flirtatious remarks at women. *Antifémima* is a visual and political essay, a manifesto in favor of women but against ‘femininity,’ which is always “related to the passive role of women.”

## CATALOGUE

A catalogue on this exhibition has been published by the Museo Reina Sofía, Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) and RM. This books includes a text written by the curator and Javier Ortiz-Echagüe, photographs of all the artworks shown and complete and individual information about each photobook by different specialized authors (Horacio Fernández, Javier Ortiz-Echagüe, Concha Calvo, Rocío Robles, Mafalda Rodríguez, Angélica Soleiman and Laura Terré).

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