

## Idea: Painting-Force The hinge of the 1970s and 1980s



Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía  
Palacio de Velázquez  
Fotografía: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores

- DATES:** 6th November 2013 – 18th May 2014
- PLACE:** Palacio de Velázquez. Parque del Retiro (Madrid, Spain)
- ORGANIZED BY:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain)
- CURATOR:** Armando Montesinos
- COORDINATION:** Gemma Bayón and Natasha Goffman
- RELATED ACTIVITIES** Encounter, *Idea: Painting-Force*  
15<sup>th</sup> November, 18:00 h, Nouvel Building, Auditorium 200  
With the exhibition's curator, Armando Montesinos; the art critic and journalist Mariano Navarro and the Art History professor Juan Pablo Wert.

**Idea: Painting-Force** presents a set of works produced in Spain between the years 1976 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.

## **RELATED ACTIVITIES**

### **Encounter: Meeting, Idea: Painting-Force 15th November, 18:00 h, Nouvel Building, Auditorium 200**

With the participation of Armando Montesinos, Mariano Navarro and Juan Pablo Wert, this activity presents the exhibition Idea: Painting-Force. Like the exhibition, the colloquium examines one of the last periods, from 1978 to 1984, in which painting was the main medium in intellectual debates and it had a public dimension that is vital for understanding art during Spain's transition to democracy.

Through three presentations quite different from each other, the encounter broadens earlier lines of work, such as the one put forward in Schizos in Madrid. Madrid's figurative movement in the 70s, and attempts to delve more deeply into the period, showing some of its contradictions.

### **Program**

6:00 p.m. Armando Montesinos. Genesis of the exhibition Idea: Painting-Force.  
6:40 p.m. Juan Pablo Wert. History and the Academy in the artistic culture of the Transition  
7:00 p.m. Mariano Navarro. The Critical Gaze  
7:40 p.m. Round table

### **Participants**

Armando Montesinos, professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Cuenca (Universidad de Castilla La Mancha). He has written about and curated, both individually and collectively, on a wide range of artists from this period. He has been the director of the galleries Fernando Vijande, Juana Mordó and Helga de Alvear and deputy director of the program La Edad de Oro, aired by TVE-2. He is the curator of Idea: Painting-Force. On the hinge between the 70s and 80s (Museo Reina Sofía, November 2013-May 2014).

Mariano Navarro, art critic and curator. From the mid seventies to the present he has worked as a critic in media such as El País, ABC, La Razón and El Cultural, the art magazine of the newspaper El Mundo. He contributes regularly to the journal Artecontexto. Among many other exhibitions, he curated Public Spaces –Private Dreams (Comunidad de Madrid, 1994), Images of abstraction: Spanish painting and sculpture 1969-1989 (Fundación Caja Madrid, 1999), Andalusia and modernity: From Equipo 57 to the 1970s generation (CAAC, Seville, 2002), The Guerrero Effect (Centro José Guerrero, Granada, 2006) and No Reality, No Utopia (The Political Constitution of the Present) (CAAC, Seville and Yerbabuena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, 2011 and 2012).

Juan Pablo Wert Ortega, professor of Art History at the Faculty of Letters of Ciudad Real (Universidad de Castilla La Mancha). He has written extensively on film and art during the Spanish transition to democracy and the related cultural scenes, in different group

publications, conferences and research projects. Of particular interest is his participation in Disagreements. On art, politics and the public sphere in Spain, and his role as co-curator of Schizos of Madrid (Museo Reina Sofía, Fundación Suñol and CAAC, 2009).

## **CATALOGUE**

A catalogue of the exhibition has been edited and it includes texts of the curator, Armando Montesinos, and of the art critic and journalist Mariano Navarro. The catalogue reproduces the works of the exhibition.

### **For further information:**

PRESS OFFICE

MUSEO REINA SOFÍA

[prensa1@museoreinasofia.es](mailto:prensa1@museoreinasofia.es)

[prensa2@museoreinasofia.es](mailto:prensa2@museoreinasofia.es)

(+34) 91 774 10 05 / 06

[www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa](http://www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa)