

The Conceptual Reduction

Under this title, Spain's exhibition in Venice assembled a generation of young artists who belonged to what is known today as Spanish Conceptualism. This trend of the newest art from the period was represented by the works of Alberto Corazón, Muntadas, Francesc Torres and the Catalan collective Grup de Treball.



Of those mentioned above, it was Grup de Treball and Alberto Corazón whose writings would dominate the exhibition's curatorial texts – the two works displayed here, and present in Venice, analyse the power of the media. In the case of *Camp d'atracció. Document. Treball d'informació sobre la premsa il·legal dels Països Catalans*, an intervention made for the 1975 Paris Biennale, the artists' collective analysed, semiotically, the coded messages of Catalonia's underground press. Corazón, by contrast, focused on one aspect of the national mainstream media, the newspaper ABC, decoding the iconographic representation of Francisco Franco during the dictatorship.

In the words of Valeriano Bozal, which appeared in the catalogue published in 1976:

"[Conceptualism] means to question not only traditional materials but the artwork itself. [...] Calling into question artistic practice means questioning the art market's normal channels so as to attain contact with the public in general and artistic and intellectual media in particular which do not have 'media exposure'.

From a theoretical point of view, the contribution of Grup was considerable: firstly, for removing problems from the framework of traditional linguistic-artistic codes; secondly, for taking the discussion into terrain which made the usual acceptance of style problematic; and, thirdly, for tackling, implicitly or explicitly, the whole pseudo-cultural apparatus which, in the form of critique, literary commentary, etc. circled artistic projects.

En favor de un arte perfectamente útil (In Favour of a Perfectly Useful Art, 1973) is the title of a text by Alberto Corazón. The affirmation contained in the title will be heresy to all those who think and vehemently maintain that art and usefulness have been contested ever since the bourgeois concept of a useless, unpractical art was imposed. Yet making these conceptions one of the natural principles of aesthetics does not seem reasonable. *En favor de un arte perfectamente útil* ends up affirming that the work of the artist must be included in the general strategy of man's struggle for liberation. To end this is a good start."