



MEADOWS MUSEUM
SMU · DALLAS

**MEADOWS MUSEUM TO HOST EXHIBITION FROM
LEGENDARY COLLECTION OF MUSEUM OF SPANISH ABSTRACT ART
IN CUENCA, SPAIN**

In the Shadow of Dictatorship: Creating the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art is the Only United States Appearance of These Abstract Masterpieces

DALLAS (SMU)— January 30, 2023—This spring the Meadows Museum, SMU, will host the first major exhibition of Spanish abstract paintings and sculptures to take place in the United States since the 1970s. Titled *In the Shadow of Dictatorship: Creating the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art* (February 26 to June 18, 2023), the exhibition presents a comprehensive selection of highlights from the eponymous museum (Museo de Arte Abstracto Español) whose historic building in Cuenca, Spain, is currently undergoing renovations. The Dallas presentation will be the only American venue of this multiyear touring exhibition, which also includes stops in Spain and Germany. It features both globally recognized artists such as Eduardo Chillida, José Guerrero, Pablo Palazuelo, Antonio Saura, and Antoni Tàpies, as well as their lesser-known contemporaries, encompassing more than forty works of art by over thirty artists active in the 1960s and 1970s. A richly illustrated catalogue exploring the history of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art against the cultural and political backdrop of the last decade of Francisco Franco’s regime accompanies the exhibition, co-edited by Clarisse Fava-Piz, curator of the exhibition and the Meadows’s 2021–2023 Mellon Curatorial Fellow, and Amanda W. Dotseth, director *ad interim* and curator of the Meadows Museum.

“This is an incredible opportunity to see the usually distant collection of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art in the States within the framework of the spectrum of Spanish art history at the Meadows Museum, showcasing the story of Spanish abstract art during a politically turbulent period,” said Dotseth. “This world renowned, intriguing collection has much to teach us about history, artistic process, collaboration, and materiality, showing the great diversity of Spanish abstraction, from Informalism to geometric abstract art.”

Artist-collector Fernando Zóbel (1924–1984), founder of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art, chose to establish the museum in Cuenca when in 1963, the town’s mayor offered him a block of abandoned, centuries-old structures known as the “Casas Colgadas” (Hanging Houses), so called for their cantilevered perch over a steep cliff above a bend in the Huécar River. Since the museum’s opening in 1966, curators have carefully integrated its objects into the unique spatial environment of the historic space. One of Chillida’s most iconic sculptures, a large assemblage of poplar wood entitled

Rough Chant IV (*Abesti gogorra IV*, 1959–1964), was chosen for the entry to the museum; in the Meadows’s exhibition it greets visitors in an introductory gallery along with a painting by Zóbel from the Meadows’s own collection, *The Lake* (*El lago*, 1971), an expansive gray canvas with bright black slashes and light text.

The next section explores works by artists who were members of groups that were founded in opposition to the artistic conservatism of Francoist Spain. Dau al Set, a Barcelona-based artists’ association co-founded by Antoni Tàpies is represented by the artist’s *Brown and Ocher* (*Marró i ocre*, 1959). Also featured are works by the Informalist artists Luis Feito, Manolo Millares, and Saura from the Madrid-based group El Paso.

The exhibition also investigates the theme of materiality through the presentation of artworks made with various materials—wood, copper, iron, metal powder, burlap, and steel—that deliberately transgress the traditional two-dimensionality of the pictorial plane. Manuel Rivera’s *Metamorphosis (November)* (*Metamorfosis (Noviembre)*, 1962) is created with wire gauze, wire, and paint on copper plate and board, giving the impression of a Rorschach test on a shiny copper background. Two sculptures are also presented in this section: a bronze by Pablo Serrano and a wrought iron piece by Martín Chirino.

The following gallery features bright works with paint slashed and sliced across the canvases, including Feito’s *Number 460-A* (*Número 460-A*, 1963), a school-bus yellow background with saturated black and vibrant red areas. *Blue Intervals* (*Intervalos azules*, 1971) by Guerrero is a work of cool blues, violet, green, and black, a rest for the eyes after the brightness of Feito’s work. The room dedicated to geometric abstraction highlights works with strong lines and shapes, such as *Yellow Bands I* (*Bandas amarillas I*, 1978) by Jordi Teixidor, which resembles an aged sheet of notebook paper; and the white-on-white assembled wood, oil, and acrylic on panel piece *From East to West* (*De levante a poniente*, 1974) by Gerardo Rueda.

A full gallery is dedicated to the recreation of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art’s “Sala Negra” (Black Room), an immersive gallery space that offers a meditative environment in which to view selected paintings from its collection. In contrast to the other galleries, the walls are painted black, with only a few spotlights cast onto the works. For the viewer, the resulting effect is that the paintings take on an almost three-dimensional quality and their colors are intensified. Included in this section is Rivera’s *Sun Mirror* (*Espejo del sol*, 1966), a warm, almost glowing monochromatic work of wire gauze, wire, and paint on plywood board. Another work viewers can get lost in is *Homage to Zurbarán* (*Homenaje a Zurbarán*, 1970) by Gustavo Torner, methacrylate on painted wood, a soft and hazy yellow and white piece with a vanishing point in the middle of the work.

To compliment and further contextualize the exhibition, the Meadows will install a large selection of paintings and sculpture from its permanent collection dating from the mid-20th century to the present in an adjacent gallery. Highlights include works by artists represented in the exhibition (Tàpies, Saura, Gerardo Rueda, Albert Ràfols-Casamada); their contemporaries (Xavier Corberó, Antonio Rodríguez Luna, Esteban Vicente); and later artists drawing inspiration from them (Miquel Barceló, Secundino Hernández, and Miguel Zapata). In its first-floor galleries the Meadows will feature works on paper created both in response to and in the wake of the Francoist regime, most famously Pablo Picasso's etching series *The Dream and Lie of Franco I and II* (1937).

Exhibition-related programming includes collaborations with Dallas Film for a "Film and Franco" series and with nonprofit arts incubator Cedars Union for in-person gallery talks by Dallas-based artists. A bilingual audio guide, accessible from anywhere via the museum's website, will analyze six works throughout the exhibition, gathering the voices of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, including Celina Quintas, the manager of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art, and the artist José Maria Yturralde, whose work *Ritmo* (1966) is on display. The museum's "Further Afield" series of virtual talks this spring will focus on art, culture, and life in Francoist Spain (1939–75), while Robert Lubar Messeri (Associate Professor of Modern Art, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and Joan Miró Curator, Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal) will deliver an in-person lecture considering the growth of abstract art in Spain during the 1950s.

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About the Meadows Museum

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows's vision to create "a small Prado for Texas." Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters.

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