

# Cuenca: City of Spanish abstraction

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Chestnut Hill, Mass.: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2019

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# Cuenca: City of Spanish Abstraction

edited by Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta



McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College

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This publication is issued to accompany the exhibition [\*Cuenca: City of Spanish Abstraction\*](#) in the Monan Gallery at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, February 11–June 2, 2019. Organized by the McMullen Museum in conjunction with the [\*Fundación Juan March\*](#), *Cuenca* has been curated by Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta with major support from the Patrons of the McMullen Museum.

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McMULLEN  
MUSEUM OF ART  
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Cover: Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), *Nazario*, 1977 (1/360), 11-color serigraph and process engraving on Guarro Geler paper, 100 x 72 cm, Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0746G.



# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Cuenca: City of Spanish Abstraction; Repression and Resistance</b> Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta	<b>3</b>
<b>An Artists' Museum, a Democratic Museum</b> Manuel Fontán del Junco	<b>17</b>
<b>Plates</b>	<b>32</b>

# Preface

The birth of this exhibition and publication took place in the fall of 2017 at the opening of an exhibition at the McMullen Museum that the Fundación Juan March had organized, *Esteban Lisa: The Abstract Cabinet*. On that occasion, the pleasure and enhancement of knowledge engendered through the collaboration of our two institutions led the Fundación's head of exhibition projects, María Toledo, and Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta, a faculty member in Hispanic Studies at Boston College, to hatch the idea for sharing the important story, little known on this side of the Atlantic, of the founding and flowering of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca. In March 2018 Thompson Goizueta and I traveled to Spain to work with Toledo to select key prints and portfolios from the Museo's collection (since 1981 under the direction of the Fundación), to epitomize significant milestones in the Cuenca group's development over the past half century. The result is this assemblage of outstanding works by fourteen artists, many who aided Fernando Zóbel in founding the Museo, and others who, inspired by the initial group, entered later to help it flourish.

The McMullen Museum's greatest debt of gratitude is due the exhibition's curator, Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta, who crafted the exhibition's narrative and edited this catalogue. She and the director of the Fundación Juan March, Manuel Fontán del Junco, have contributed insightful essays on the history and significance of the Museo as a refuge led by abstract artists living in Spain first under the Franco regime and later under a democratic government. With no less appreciation we thank our colleagues at the Fundación Juan March and the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, especially Manuel Fontán del Junco, María Toledo, and Inés Vallejo, for generously loaning their works and for providing wisdom and critical guidance at all stages of the planning process.

The project has been steered to completion by the McMullen staff and others at Boston College. Assistant Director Diana Larsen designed the installation and organized framing of the works by Daisy Wong. Assistant Director John McCoy designed this e-publication and the exhibition's website and graphics inspired by geometric typography and the grid-based layout of postwar modernism. Manager of Publications and Exhibitions Kate Shugert oversaw the loan process and copyedited this volume for which Andrea Van Houtven provided translations. Manager of Education, Outreach, and Digital Resources Rachel Chamberlain arranged programs for audiences of all ages to engage with the exhibition, and Christopher Soldt of Media Technology Services photographed many of the works in the catalogue.

The Museum also appreciates the assistance of Grupo Desenfoque, which made an accompanying film in Cuenca, and Erin Goodman who provided its translation. Two of the Cuenca group artists, Gustavo Torner and Jordi Teixidor, generously spent time with us and agreed to participate in the film.

The Museum remains grateful for the following endowments that provide vital support for all our proj-

ects: Linda '64 and Adam Crescenzi Fund, Janet M. and C. Michael Daley '58 Fund, Gerard and Jane Gaughan Fund for Exhibitions, Hecksher Family Fund, Hightower Family Fund, John F. McCarthy and Gail M. Bayer Fund, Christopher J. Toomey '78 Fund, and Alison S. and William M. Vareika '74, P'09, '15 Fund.

As always, the McMullen Museum could never have undertaken this project without the ongoing support of the administration of Boston College and the McMullen Family Foundation. We especially thank Jacqueline McMullen, President William P. Leahy, SJ; Provost David Quigley; Vice Provost Billy Soo; and Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences Dean Gregory Kalscheur, SJ. Major support for the exhibition was provided by the Patrons of the McMullen Museum, chaired by C. Michael Daley. To all mentioned above, we extend deeply felt thanks.

Nancy Netzer, Director and Professor of Art History

# Cuenca: City of Spanish Abstraction Repression and Resistance

Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta

Cuenca, Spain, is a city dedicated to art. That characteristic is palpable in its air, its streets, its buildings, and its inhabitants. I first discovered the magical charms of Cuenca on a pilgrimage to the city for a retrospective exhibition in 2014–15, in which I was retracing the artistic footprints of Cuban-born painter Wifredo Lam. During a fifteen-year sojourn in Spain (1923–38), Lam summered in the cool air of Cuenca from 1925 to 1927, producing many works while there.<sup>1</sup> A close examination of Lam's painting *Casas Colgadas, III [Paisaje de Cuenca]*, 1927 (fig. 1), offers a realist depiction of the buildings that so fascinate viewers.



1. Wifredo Lam (1902–82), *Casas Colgadas, III [Paisaje de Cuenca]* (*Hanging Houses, III [Landscape of Cuenca]*), 1927. Oil on canvas, 94 x 118 cm, Rudman Collection.

Structures built directly into the façade of soaring stone hills jut out precariously into space, seemingly defying the laws of gravity and physics. For greater dramatic effect, these structures hang over a deep abyss, culminating in a steep drop to the river Huécar (fig. 2). Access to the city is by a footbridge with dizzying views of the snaking river below. Fascination yields to delight and wonder upon viewing these

fifteenth-century “hanging houses” (*casas colgadas*), testaments to both endurance and imagination.<sup>2</sup>



2. Hanging houses, Cuenca.

Cuenca, located east of Madrid, is now accessible by a forty-minute high-speed train ride from the capital. The city has remained a quiet oasis of inspiration for generations of poets and artists. The great poets from the Spanish Golden Age, Luis de Góngora and Fray Luis de León, eulogized the city as a refuge for creativity.<sup>3</sup> In addition to Lam, twentieth-century Spanish luminaries such as philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno, who spoke of the “unraveling houses that lean out at the peak” and poet and playwright Federico García Lorca who wrote of “the enchanted air of the Charmed City,” extolled its virtues.<sup>4</sup> Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, magical realism’s most important Latin American theorist and proponent, confessed to having dreamed of this hanging city without ever having visited, based on reading Spanish writer Pío Baroja’s description of the city in *Los recursos de la astucia* (*The Resources of Cunning*).<sup>5</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, even the indefatigable adventurer and writer Ernest Hemingway explored the city with Spanish poet Carlos Barral.<sup>6</sup> Discovered and then forgotten throughout the centuries, Cuenca would nevertheless reemerge to cast its spell on more recent artists. By the end of the 1950s, a small group of Spanish abstract artists sought inspiration in Cuenca once again.

At this time, artists were embracing universal abstraction (in the United States, abstract expressionism and in Latin America, concrete or geometric abstraction) and Europe’s particular interpretation of abstraction was known as informalism. Postwar Europe had suffered greatly, not only materially but also ideologically, and museum attendance and art appreciation in general were low. If this is a discouraging summation of Europe’s artistic climate, Spain’s case is considerably more dismal. By mid-century, Spain was still under the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, who seized the reins

of power after the political and social upheavals of the 1930s erupted in the devastating Spanish Civil War (1936–39).<sup>7</sup> Spanish art historian Javier Maderuelo succinctly describes the stark conditions of producing abstract art in the early days under Franco:

The isolation the country lived in during the first decades of Franco's dictatorship further contributed in delaying the introduction of abstraction. The regime looked askance at aesthetic manifestations that spoke a cryptic language that was unquestionably subversive and foreign. The ease and freedom with which painters and sculptors applied paint and used different materials in their work offended institutions that favored an academic art that praised national values.

It thus comes as no surprise that producing abstract art at the end of the 1950s in Spain entailed a little more than adopting certain aesthetic values—it involved taking a stance and risking condemnation during a politically difficult time. This should be remembered if we are to understand the ethical magnitude of these stances and all the difficulties entailed by these artists—in sharp contrast with today, when Spanish artists can avail themselves of any subject, technique, style, or material with total freedom. It is important to remember this now that the paintings and sculptures in the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español may be contemplated in absolute calmness while enjoying the singular space provided by this Gothic building, which could lead us to a mere aesthetic consideration of works that in the past flew the avant-garde standard and were subject to critical rejection and scorn.<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1960s, the Franco regime had abandoned the monolithic aesthetic norms that had so decidedly marked the lives of the earlier Spanish intellectual diaspora. Despite this, the artistic climate in Spain continued to be characterized by a scarcity of intellectual life and isolation from any foreign contact, including access to any art books or magazines.<sup>9</sup> Many artists were forced to travel to or live abroad in Paris or Rome in order to be exposed to contemporary trends in Europe. The financial demands of such travel made it impossible for some artists to access those intellectual currents. Museums and programming stagnated with the lack of artistic and financial investment at the hands of apathetic government officials.<sup>10</sup> This last point is critical; unlike the Nazi regime in which modernist art was deemed “degenerate,” was prohibited, and confiscated, Franco's regime in Spain by the 1950s and 1960s took little if any interest in museums or their art. Spanish historian and art critic Juan Antonio Gaya Nuño, knowledgeable on the question of national artistic patrimony, was one of the few who dared to openly declare the litany of its scarcities: “poverty of ideas, anachronistic installations, anemic budgets, juridical chaos, banishment of modernity and, the most serious of all, a total renunciation of its educative function.”<sup>11</sup>

That the regime did not understand abstraction nor care to understand it remains evident; this apathy



resulted in a lack of interest in abstraction's mere existence on a local or national level. Thus, Spain was excluded from all conversations; it held no seat at the proverbial table. And this exclusion was not limited to abstraction; its reach encompassed all of modernity. In retrospect, this is shocking, given that early twentieth-century Spain had produced such outstanding masters of modernity as Picasso, Dalí, Gaudí, and Miró, all of whom changed the trajectory of modern art.

The regime eventually recognized that it could no longer impose a monopoly on academic painting nor sustain its antimodernist ire, as it had in earlier years. Loosening its resolute grip, it allowed artists to participate outside of Spain in artistic biennials, starting in 1951.<sup>12</sup> This watershed moment permitted Spain to arrive late, but finally engage in international conversations. By 1960, this early generation, composed of Eduardo Chillida, Manuel Millares, and Antonio Saura, among others, saw its abstraction as an artistic response to an intensely adverse social, political, and cultural climate; thus, its audacious interpretation augmented the visual expressions of universal abstraction (abstract expressionism and concrete art). This was a new interpretation of abstraction. Above all, the boldness of this postwar Spanish avant-garde attracted the attention of the international press. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York took the lead in recognizing the relevance of this burgeoning Spanish movement, hosting the first survey of avant-garde Spanish art in the United States in 1960. Entitled *New Spanish Painting and Sculpture*, the exhibition included fifty-four works of sixteen Spanish artists and traveled throughout the United States that same year (fig. 3).<sup>13</sup>



3. Antonio Saura (1930–98), *Crucifixion 12*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 200 x 250.5 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris, AM 1991-186.

In examining Spanish abstract art, it is perhaps easier to first distinguish it from other aesthetic interpretations, despite the obvious connection to abstraction. Spain's abstract art is distinct from American abstract expressionism, constructivism, or French lyrical abstraction.<sup>14</sup> The Spanish works are, in some ways, quintessentially Spanish. To presume to define this innovative art within such a framework is challenging, as it would signify an attempt to arrive at the heart of what is essentially "Spanish" in character. Nonetheless, certain components emerge. This generation of painters' works was characterized by a muted palette, recalling traditional Spanish art. Lest we forget, Goya's paintings reflected the supreme example of somber expression in his *Pinturas negras* (*Black Paintings*). Earlier, the renowned Baroque artists El Greco, José Ribera, Zurbarán, and Velázquez all incorporated a decided darkness in their color range. They displayed elegance in their technique of contrasting dark and light, known in Spanish as "claroscuro." This dark/light binary is reflected again in the Spanish literature of the twentieth century, bookended by the Generations of 1898 and 1927, the former led by Unamuno and his strong penchant for philosophical angst and the latter by Lorca, the prophet of wonder, love, and mysticism.<sup>15</sup> The Spanish tendency toward a dichotomy between the tragic and the wondrous is evident in these abstractions. Additionally, Spain's artists have a strong preference for "a dramatic presentation of image."<sup>16</sup> As was so aptly observed by John Dos Passos in his early 1922 treatise *Rosinante to the Road Again*, Spain is at the forefront of drama; whether through its literary playwrights and poets, visual artists, or the quotidian expression of life by its people. Finally, the handling of the material, whether through the roughness of the superimposed object—such as sewn sackcloth, sheet metal, or wood—or the texture of the brushstroke, imbues the work with a unique quality.<sup>17</sup> Spanish abstractions are interconnected yet distinct, aesthetic expressions in harmony with the whole yet clearly identifiable as the product of individuals.

In this exhibition, the independent nature so closely identified with the Spanish temperament manifests itself in the varied interpretations of abstraction by fourteen Spanish painters. Two prominent artists emerge in this narrative as a driving force behind the movement. Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), a peripatetic and cosmopolitan citizen of the world, had lived in Spain as a child (1933–36) before the Civil War but hailed from the Philippines.<sup>18</sup> A 1949 graduate of Harvard in philosophy and literature, he was assistant curator in the graphic arts' section of Houghton Library; this would be a portent into his future. Parallel to that experience was his formation as an artist. In 1954–55 he was invited to attend the Rhode Island School of Design as an artist-in-residence,<sup>19</sup> that same year participating in the II Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte in Havana, Cuba. In 1955 he traveled to Europe for three months. On that trip, he arrived in Madrid and serendipitously "discovered"<sup>20</sup> an exhibition entitled: *Artistas de Hoy: Arte Abstracto* (*Artists of Today—Abstract Art*). Zóbel describes his first exposure to Spanish abstraction:



The day before returning to the Philippines, an odd occurrence, by coincidence I came across the Galería Fernando Fe, in the center of Madrid, that had a small poster that said: "Exhibition on Spanish Abstraction." And I said to myself: "Man, how wonderful! What's this?" And I went up and all of a sudden I discovered Luis Feito, with works of Saura, Chillida and Tàpies. They were in a gallery that seemed to be quite modest, where there was a sort of vitality and, above all, I was aware of the extraordinary level of quality in this generation that was more or less my own. The next day I left, but a correspondence began. And the next trip I now knew where to go. And that started, let's say, my identification with this generation and with its style of thinking on painting.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning a lifelong dedication to supporting Spanish art, Zóbel bought two paintings from that exhibition. For the first time he also met Rafael Canogar, Antonio Lorenzo, and Gerardo Rueda, all future protagonists in the movement.<sup>22</sup> By 1959, Zóbel was exhibiting his own work with those of his Spanish colleagues, supporting them as a patron and adding to his own exceptional abstract art collection, with a view toward creating a museum. Zóbel combined the rare qualities of the passion of a painter, the zeal of a collector, and the imagination of a visionary to dream of creating a museum. Add to this his exquisite taste, rigorous academic training, insatiable intellectual curiosity, and economic means to cultivate those qualities, and it is clear that without Zóbel, the Spanish abstract movement would have suffered enormously. Arguably, the Spanish abstract movement still has not yet received its international due, but Zóbel, along with others, provided the initial impetus and support to sustain and encourage the movement's unimagined trajectory.

Spanish art historian and Zóbel scholar Ángeles Villalba Salvador observed, "Knowing that the international triumph of these artists barely had a local repercussion, the appearance of the painter Fernando Zóbel on the Spanish scene as collector and patron of his colleagues was of great importance since, for the first time inside of Spain, the works of these artists were valued and supported as far as meriting the creation of a museum."<sup>23</sup>

Zóbel's interest in Spain was longstanding, from childhood through adulthood (indeed, Zóbel's thesis at Harvard was "Theme and Conflict in the Drama of Lorca"<sup>24</sup>). Promoting and painting alongside these Spanish abstract artists, Zóbel was considered not only part of the movement but also essential to it. Indeed, Zóbel, along with Cuencan Gustavo Torner and others, was invited to exhibit in the Spanish pavilion of the XXXI Biennale of Venice in 1962. It was at that fortuitous opening that these two artists would meet for the first time.<sup>25</sup> Their fate, as well as that of the movement, was sealed.

Upon Zóbel's return to Madrid, he organized a dinner with Torner and other interested artists, including Eusebio Sempere, who inquired as to the status of Zóbel's search for a museum. Originally envisioning the museum for Toledo, Zóbel replied that he had had no luck with finding a building in that city that could be used to house his art collection and promote the work of Spanish abstraction. Over-

hearing Sempere's inquiry, Torner suggested that Zóbel accompany him to Cuenca. Knowing that the upper quarters of the city were difficult to reach and underpopulated, Torner understood that the city was selling property at extremely low prices.<sup>26</sup> He brought Zóbel to visit in 1962. Greatly impressed, Zóbel felt as though Cuenca would provide the perfect context for his museum, thanks in large part to the willingness of the city to encourage and nurture the museum over time. By 1963, the formation of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was approved by the city hall of Cuenca.



4. Fernando Zóbel (columns 1, 3) and Gustavo Torner (column 2) in the Museo de Arte Abstracto's workshops and offices, c. 1966.

From that point on, these two co-founders, Zóbel and Torner (fig. 4), worked tirelessly to promote Spanish abstract art, encouraging other painters to join them in buying property in Cuenca. In a note from Zóbel to other artists, he commented, "this place is full of painters, absolutely bursting at the seams."<sup>27</sup> Once again, Spanish art historian Maderuelo eloquently describes the conditions under which the museum came into existence and how it provided the catalyst for a city's renovation:

Aided by many of the artists whose work he collected, especially by Torner and Rueda, who were the first curators of the collection, Zóbel persuaded Cuenca's town council to cede the use of part of the Hanging Houses, which had recently been restored, and where the museum opened its doors in 1966.

Soon, some of the painters represented in the museum started moving into the upper quarter of Cuenca, whose buildings were then lying in ruins. Zóbel, Torner, Antonio Saura, Manuel Millares, Rueda, Antonio Lorenzo, Sempere and José Guerrero were amongst these artists, while Jordi Teixidor and José María Yturralde contributed their help at the museum. This was how the miracle occurred: the renovation, through art, of a neighborhood with the museum as its hub.<sup>28</sup>

Given Zóbel's passion for drawing and graphic arts, it is not surprising, yet nevertheless audacious, that he conceived of and installed a printing workshop in the museum. It was available to all artists.<sup>29</sup>

In examining the chronology of the museum in *La ciudad abstracto*, Alfonso de la Torre states, "Even though the Museo de Arte Abstracto did not open its doors until 1966, its initiatives for planning and transforming the area, together with some of its activities, among them graphic works, were begun in 1963."<sup>30</sup> The importance of creating and disseminating this art under the 1960s dictatorship cannot be overestimated: long deemed unimportant, graphics were quickly becoming a lost art. Artists had no access to workshops where they could execute their prints; hence, there were limited editions, few specialists, and no dedicated print galleries.<sup>31</sup> Spanish art historian Rafael Pérez Madero remembers, "At that moment it was almost an authentic novelty to be able to gain direct access to the original graphic works of the abstract painters."<sup>32</sup> The first series of serigraphs were made in the museum in 1964 and the current exhibition displays four 1964 first editions from Fernando Zóbel, Gustavo Torner, Eusebio Sempere, and Gerardo Rueda (plates 4, 6–7, 9). Zóbel's strategy in printing graphic works before the official opening of the museum in 1966 was twofold; he wished to familiarize the public with the works of the masters whose paintings would form the bulk of the museum's collection as well as to create a certain anticipation for that auspicious moment. Arturo Sagastibelza, in his book on the graphic works at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, states, "The breadth and depth of this editorial endeavor—let's not forget it—accomplished by a small private museum, lacking in economic and bureaucratic resources as compared to an official institution, is astonishing. The museum has obtained not only the best and most coherent collection of Spanish abstract art, incomparable to those anemic attempts by official museums, but has also created a true cultural life around which it revolves, with an unbelievably rich and selective publishing activity. All of this is due to a small group of painters [operating] far from the officials."<sup>33</sup> Zóbel stated in 1978 that when he created the museum fifteen years previously, there was no interest in Spain for graphic works: "There was no way that anyone would take something on paper with them....Ten years later in Spain graphic works have inundated us and I believe that the Museo de Arte Abstracto in Cuenca has played a great role in this change of attitude on the part of the public."<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the most brilliant of all these efforts were the editions of the magnificent portfolios, notebooks, and artists' books that are included in the collection, a selection of which are presented in this exhibition (plates 12, 19, 22, 38). Given Zóbel's great admiration for books and his earlier training at Houghton Library, he carefully directed and supervised these works always with the graphic designer and typographer Ricard Giralt-Miracle and, in many cases, in collaboration with the specific artist.<sup>35</sup>



5. Entrance to the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, 1966. Photo: Jaime Blassi.

Juana Mordó was one of the rare gallery owners in Madrid promoting abstraction. In 1964, she opened her gallery with an exhibition on the works of Cuenca's painters.<sup>36</sup> By the time the museum opened its doors in 1966 (fig. 5), the international press, including the *New York Herald* and the *New York Times*, had already published articles on the hanging houses. The museum even garnered local press attention with an article in the Spanish magazine, *Triunfo*.<sup>37</sup> On opening day, June 30, there were 266 works of art displayed by 87 artists (105 oils, 14 sculptures, 60 drawings, 74 editions of graphic works, and 13 artists' books).<sup>38</sup> City officials, museum founders, and the Spanish press were present at the official inauguration of the museum. At the unofficial opening the next day, the group of Spanish abstract



artists had staked their claim on history. In an excerpt from Zóbel's diary, he wrote,

I had not invited anyone [to the official inauguration of the museum] so that no one could say that they had been excluded. The groups that came from Madrid in the evening came simply because they wanted to come. There were fifty of us at dinner...Fernando Nuño took photos of the entire group hanging along the stairway.<sup>39</sup>



6. Opening of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, July 1, 1966 with Fernando Zóbel at center (arms crossed). Photo: Fernando Nuño.

Strikingly, in the roll call of painters, not one was female. Given the boldness and innovation of thought in the movement, it seems inconceivable that no female painters participated in this original group. A quick glance at the inauguration photograph of the museum shows a dynamic group of participants, male and female (fig. 6). Sadly, the females here were restricted to a strictly supportive role.

A closer examination of “the woman’s place” during the dictatorship reveals women in decidedly traditional roles with little opportunity to break the mold. Nonetheless, conservative expectations by 1966 were being questioned, both in university protests and church pulpits. Spanish historian Santos Juliá posits that these two mainstay supports, the middle class, who sent their children to university, and the Catholic Church, which directed its prayers for the protection of Franco, had witnessed steady erosion by 1966. The catalysts for change would be the increased demand for secularization and the acceptance of democratic values by the Spanish episcopate as promoted in Pope John XXIII’s papal encyclical *Pacem in terris*.<sup>40</sup> Juliá avers that the alliance of church and state was subjugated now to a higher power, that of Rome, through the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. This rejection of national allegiances over and against a higher moral allegiance caused a crisis in the Spanish episcopate: from 1966 on, priestly ordinations dropped in only five or six years from numbers of over six thousand to less than three hundred, with a correlative increased demand for secularization.<sup>41</sup> Juliá goes on to explain, “In Spain, first the encyclical and afterward the council, which closed its doors at the end of 1965, completely unhinged the system of ideas and beliefs that, since the end of the Civil War, had ruled the relationship between the State and the Church....[The] process of secularization... was extended through a society that in those years experienced its most profound economic transformation.”<sup>42</sup>

The convergence of secularization, university protests, and economic resurgence led to greater freedom, including an increase in equality for women. At the end of this pivotal year of political and social change, 1966, Zóbel traveled to Seville to exhibit his drawings. This trip brought him into contact with Andalusian artist Carmen Laffón and gallerist Juana de Aizpuru, among others, whose works were quickly incorporated into the museum’s collection.

Not only were women gaining more advances in the public arena but the dictatorship’s acceptance of abstract art was evolving as well. The political culture at the end of Franco’s dictatorship, in the late 1960s and 1970s, intuited a unique opportunity: accepting abstract art could be a way to modernize, to become European and, at the same time, to align Franco’s Spain with the rest of Europe. Up to this point in the twentieth century, Spain had been estranged from its neighboring countries as much as from the broader international arena, a direct casualty of Franco’s isolationist stance and the absence of Spain in both World Wars along with Europe’s subsequent socioeconomic and political recoveries. By embracing abstraction the regime could demonstrate an openness to modernity without risking a more explicit politicization of art; Franco’s dictatorship would not have to be sacrificed on the altar of freedom. A nascent cultural openness would now be tolerated and, indeed, promoted in non-democratic Spain. Eventually, this cultural transformation would become the seedbed for the future democratization process in post-Franco Spain.<sup>43</sup>

The subsequent years after the official opening of the museum in 1966 witnessed tremendous growth in visitors from five thousand the first year to an all time peak of almost fifty-four thousand in 1989.

Along with visitors, stunning accolades and awards poured in. Alfred H. Barr Jr., MoMA director (1929–43), visited Cuenca in December 1966 as MoMA's director of collections (1947–67). He declared the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español "the most beautiful small museum in the world."<sup>44</sup> In 1970 he reiterated in a letter to Zóbel that the museum "is surely one of the most admirable, indeed brilliant works of art, a remarkable balance of painting, sculpture and architecture."<sup>45</sup> A glance at the guest's book reveals a list of prominent personalities; the roster includes Roy Lichtenstein, Felix Klee, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Salvador Dalí, Rufino Tamayo, Carlos Saura, Geraldine Chaplin, Equipo Crónica, Oswaldo Guayasamín, Günther Grass, Antonio López García, and our very own Boston Museum of Fine Arts' curator of prints and drawings, Eleanor Sayre (the first woman to head a department in the museum's history), among so many others.

With Franco's death in 1975, Spain took its first tentative yet decisive steps toward democracy. In 1978, the museum increased its exhibition space with an addition, and it continued to promote the inclusion of female artists with exhibitions for Elena Asins (1977), Soledad Sevilla (1983), and Susana Solano (1988), all of whose works are currently included in the museum collection. Today, Spain's dedication to equality, in gender and all forms, has been a hallmark of the post-Franco democracy.

Perhaps presciently sensitive to his own mortality and his legacy at the museum, Zóbel, at fifty-seven years of age, decided in 1981 to donate the collection of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español to the Fundación Juan March. For over thirty-eight years the Fundación has stewarded Zóbel's legacy, through its many innovative exhibitions, scholarly publications, and expansion of the collection and museum. In an interview that appeared in the Fundación Juan March's bulletin, Zóbel expressed his wish:

I think it is important and an attractive [component] that the museum continues to be private, with a responsibility toward the public. For me, it is important that it continues to exude an experimental content. For diverse reasons, I believe it ought not to enter into any official apparatus. In accepting my donation of the collection of Spanish abstract art, the Fundación assumes the responsibility for the future of the museum. This, for me, signifies peace, excitement, and hope.<sup>46</sup>

At the time of the donation, the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español counted 690 works from 150 artists, 216 paintings, and 31 sculptures in its collection; the remainder were drawings, gouaches, and prints.<sup>47</sup> It is a privilege to pay homage to this graphic collection at the McMullen Museum of Art and to recognize the accomplishments of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español and Fernando Zóbel, the artist and collector, in this arena.

Sadly, Zóbel died unexpectedly at the age of sixty from a heart attack while visiting Rome in 1984. Through the Fundación Juan March, Zóbel's spirit endures, still palpable to artists and visitors alike. As has been the case through the centuries, Cuenca today evinces the peace that Zóbel so fervently

sought. The indefatigable efforts of the Fundación Juan March continue to generate excitement and hope.

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- 1 Amparo López Redondo, *Wifredo Lam en Cuenca, 1925–1927*, exh. cat. (Cuenca: Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha, Delegación de Cuenca, 1985), 10. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
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- 16 Frank O'Hara, quoted in Museum of Modern Art, "New Spanish Painting and Sculpture," press release no. 85, July 20, 1960, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_326196.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326196.pdf), 2.
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# An Artists' Museum, a Democratic Museum

Manuel Fontán del Junco

Between 1939 and 1947, the English poet W. H. Auden wrote a poem, curiously titled “Limbo Culture.” It lyrically evokes the contradictions that can arise when one writes the history of an event, be it in the recent or distant past:

Why this concern, so marked in Limbo culture,  
This love for inexactness? Could it be  
A Limbo tribesman only loves himself?  
For that, we know, cannot be done exactly.<sup>1</sup>

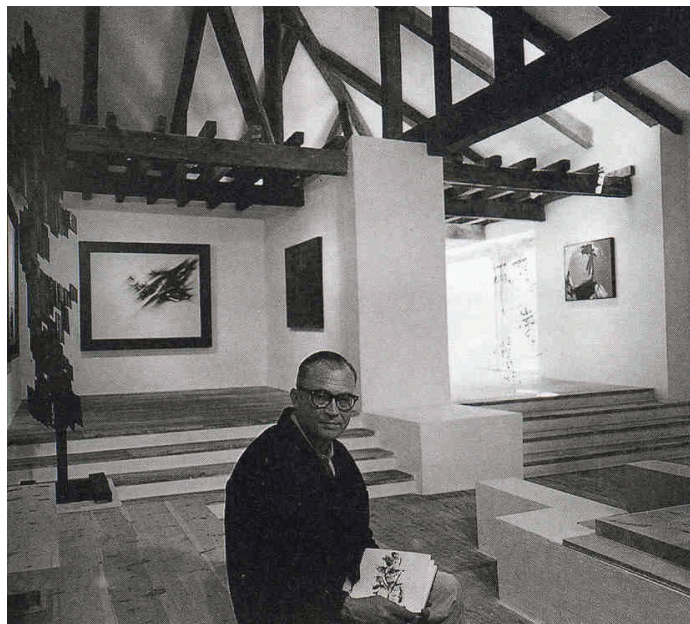
A culture in limbo is of course, an evanescent, nebulous, unclear culture. In his verses, Auden speaks of a curious “love for inexactness,” questioning if that is not what in fact characterizes the natives of that culture, and suggests as a cause that the natives of limbo do not love what is real, but only love themselves. And that is something which, in turn, cannot be done with exactness.

This contradiction between a love of self that can only be inexact and a way of telling a real story, which itself is marked by a love of inexactness, is something that any historian wants to avoid. All historians endeavor to shed their partial and subjective viewpoint and narrate a story from a distance, and with the exactness of objectivity. And they all debate about how exactly this can be achieved.

In the following pages, I would like to look at the extent to which one of the small stories that make up the recent history of art in Spain, and the relationship of artists to the general history of the country, has or has not been told with exactness; the degree to which this story is, or is not, still shrouded by the haze of the culture of limbo of which Auden spoke.

It is a story that is fast becoming an event of the past: the creation of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca, a small city in the Spanish region of Castilla-La Mancha. Two thousand sixteen marked fifty years since Fernando Zóbel (Manila 1924–Rome 1984, fig. 1) founded the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in the *casas colgadas*, or “hanging houses” of Cuenca. A painter, a man of special sensitivity and vast humanist culture, Zóbel was, since his youth, interested in poetry, philosophy, art, and collecting. In 1955, he had begun acquiring singular works by Spanish artists of his generation, at a time when art made in Spain was barely starting to be known (and well-regarded) internationally. The museum opened its doors in July 1966. A good portion of the hanging houses, which from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries has been used for residential and ecclesiastical purposes (the superb *artesonado* ceiling of what was once a bishop’s chapel has been preserved), from then on became a singular museum of contemporary art, founded by Zóbel with the support of, in particular, Gustavo Torner, who was from Cuenca.<sup>1</sup> The works from the museum’s collection, all carefully selected

on strict aesthetic grounds, were given individual display in spaces designed by Zóbel, together with Torner and assisted by Gerardo Rueda and other artists. These galleries immediately impressed visitors when the museum in this small provincial city opened its doors, and suddenly the old town of Cuenca was endowed with strong, modern features that stood in contrast to its remote location, size, and connection to the rest of Spain and the world.<sup>2</sup>



1. Fernando Zóbel in the main gallery of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca in 1966.

In Spain, the anniversary of a museum, even when it has not yet reached its fiftieth, is sure to attract media focus and the attention of authorities from the municipal level all the way up through the diplomatic corps. But in Cuenca, the museum spent most of 2015 and 2016 “open for works.” With the exception of the month-long renovation of its access points, the anniversary was used to expand and reorganize the museum’s spaces and partially improve its HVAC and lighting systems, financed in full by the Fundación Juan March (FJM), the institution that has managed and run the museum since 1981.<sup>3</sup>

The museum is famous not only for its collection of Spanish abstract art of the 1950s and 1960s, but

for the impressive group of buildings that accommodate it: a series of houses that literally hang at a height of more than two hundred meters over the gorge of the Huécar river, as seen in a photograph taken by Gustavo Torner in 1955 (fig. 2). And aside from having been repeatedly photographed by millions of tourists, they are a fixture of local iconography (fig. 3) and a historic symbol of the city. However, what has perhaps most amazed visitors since the museum was installed there in 1966 is the perfect blend (or “perfect scale” in the words of artist Antonio Lorenzo) of the contemporaneity of the works with the historical tradition of the edifice. This was achieved thanks to the finesse and talent of the artists who expertly matched a space that was under restoration and still preserved parts of its fifteenth-century layout (as well as parts dating to the 1920s) with abstract and informalist paintings in sculptures by the artists already mentioned here, and by Antonio Saura, Antoni Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida, Jorge Oteiza, Néstor Basterretxea, Eusebio Sempere, Manuel Rivera, Lucio Muñoz, Manuel Millares, Rafael Canogar, and many others.



2. Gustavo Torner, *Wall with Hanging Houses*, 1955.

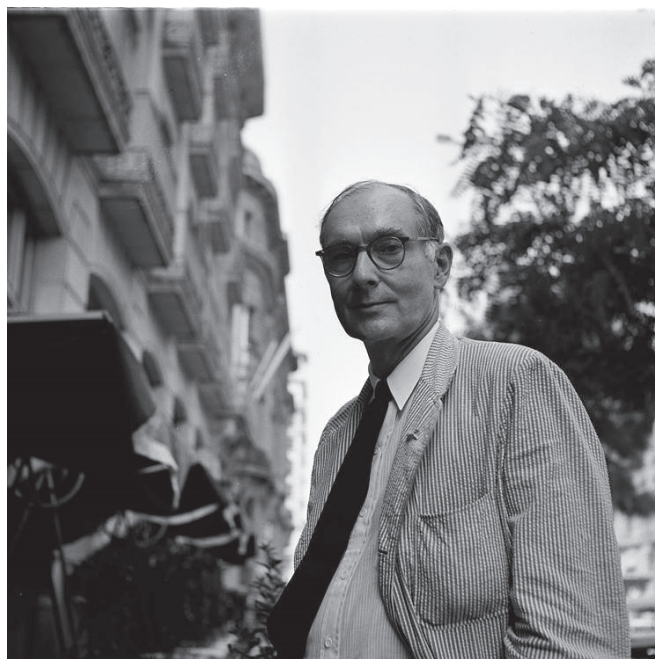


3. The hanging houses illustrated on a guide to Cuenca (*Guía de Cuenca* [1923; Cuenca: Ediciones gaceta conquense, 1986]).

With the help of Gustavo Torner and Gerardo Rueda, Zóbel designed a singular museum. The carefully meditated and strictly conceived acquisition of the works of art was followed by their placement within

this unique space, in an exercise that was heavily influenced by modern museographic approaches in the United States and Italy, but with the peculiar spaces of the medieval structures of the hanging houses always in mind.<sup>4</sup>

The story of the day the museum opened has been told numerous times,<sup>5</sup> and is recorded in a well-known photograph (see page 12 in this volume). It was attended—notably, as we shall see—by many artists and very few authorities, unlike how these events are typically attended nowadays. A few months later, the founder and first director of MoMA, Alfred H. Barr Jr. (fig. 4), visited the museum and declared it to be “the most beautiful small museum in the world.”<sup>6</sup> On March 3, 1970 Barr elaborated on this declaration in a letter to Zóbel, saying that it was “surely one of the most admirable, indeed brilliant works of art, a remarkable balance of painting, sculpture and architecture.”<sup>7</sup>



4. Alfred H. Barr Jr. in Barcelona, 1967.  
Photo: Francesc Català-Roca.

Since then, the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca has been frequently interpreted by all manner of specialists and notable personalities from around the world (inscriptions in the museum's guest book are very eloquent). Yet more than fifty years have passed since the museum was created.



In the lifetime of an individual, that is past the halfway mark, where the past is longer than the future and when one wonders if one is a mature person with a youthful spirit and much still to do, or a nostalgic fifty-something enmeshed in questions about the meaning of a life that is not young, and may not be promising.

So perhaps the most important questions to be asked now are: What was the meaning and significance of the creation of “the most beautiful small museum in the world”? Has its importance in and for Spain at the time, and for the history of contemporary art in general, which includes to a lesser or greater extent art made in Spain, been fully understood? Has it, truly? Or have we let its fifty-year existence pass as something so obvious and incontrovertible that it no longer merits further consideration? Have we converted it into such a historically established reality that our verdict has lost the edge it needs for any specific, original meaning it may have possessed to clearly stand out so many years later?

In the following pages I would like to attempt an interpretation of the primary reason for the museum and its creation, in which I see its distinctive character. My interpretation will test what I see as the most common historiographic perspective on the art (and its relationship to social and cultural reality) of the late Franco era and the first decades of democracy in Spain, in order to argue why the “magic” moment of Cuenca has not been sufficiently addressed by historiography, or museography, and also why it should be. And as a preview, what I will endeavor to show in the following pages is that fifty years on, the first museum of Spanish art and the first democratic museum in Spain, an adventure by the extraordinary personality that was Fernando Zóbel, has not been understood in its fullest dimension.

### **The Museum’s First Fifty Years**

There should be no doubt that the museum’s fiftieth anniversary has been an important milestone; and, as already stated, the Fundación Juan March was more devoted to work than to celebrations of the occasion. The months from November 2015 through June 2016 were used to make improvements to the museum while rarely closing to the public.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of the renovation was to expand the museum slightly and return some of its spaces to their original 1966 use of showing works from the collection.<sup>9</sup> As a result, since November 2016 a number of new works can now be seen in spaces that for years had been used for other purposes (figs. 5–6), which now allows for the “slow rotation of works” (an expression used by Fernando Zóbel) that was characteristic of the museum in its early years.

The balance Barr referred to in his letter was the aim of the renovation begun in 2016. Designed by Juan Pablo Rodríguez Frade and directed by Juan González de las Cuevas, it has returned almost all of the original spaces of the museum to the uses they had during its first years. The museum was expanded to include one gallery in the Mesón Casas Colgadas, a building that belongs to the city of

Cuenca, and which has granted its use. The exterior appearance of the buildings remains unchanged, while the layout of its interior and connections between the various floors and buildings was only slightly modified to improve accessibility, flow, and functionality. The interior renovations were done to put the space to maximum use and allow the museum to hold three or four temporary exhibitions per year. Its collection of works on paper, artists' books, and part of Zóbel's large library, all of which for lack of space had been moved in the 1980s to the headquarters of the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, are now back in Cuenca. The spaces that contain historical remnants of the building have been reopened to the public, with optimum temperature and humidity conditions for exhibiting works of art there and in the new exhibition hall. The gallery that had been used for temporary exhibitions has regained the small windows that bring natural light in from the river gorge, and has been converted into a multi-use space, with a small auditorium for concerts, courses, and conferences open to the public, which simultaneously acts as the museum's library, archive, and documentation space. Next to it is the museum education studio, which hosts over seven thousand schoolchildren every year, with newer and larger facilities, and the bookstore and boutique have also been improved.



5. Works on paper galleries in the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, c. 1966.



6. Image of the same galleries with the exhibition *Esteban Lisa: El gabinete abstracto*, 2017.

### **Fernando Zóbel: *L'artiste bienheureux*, or the Museum as a Staple of Culture**

The path of the museum project that culminated in Cuenca began in 1963. After meeting Gustavo Torner at the 1962 Venice Biennale,<sup>10</sup> Fernando Zóbel visited Cuenca, fell in love with the place, and with the hanging houses, which were being restored at the time. Zóbel had found the ideal venue to establish a museum. He was supported by the city of Cuenca, which owned the houses and agreed to lease him the properties for a symbolic rent, though he would have to pay for the transformation of

the buildings and the operations as a museum. It opened its doors in 1966, as if everything had fallen neatly into place for the then small and poorly linked, but beautiful and ancient city of Cuenca to have a modern museum.

The museum opened at a time in Spain when knowledge about contemporary art, and to a greater extent abstract art, was strongly limited. Only a handful of galleries and museums existed, and activity was scant in those institutions, which made the opening of the museum in Cuenca a major event, especially within the artistic circles of the time.

In most of the countries around Spain, culture as a whole, and modern and contemporary art in particular was, like health and education, part of national welfare policies and the political aims of a social market economy; by the end of the 1960s it constituted a “public service” throughout most of free Europe. By contrast, the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was born in a Spain that remained culturally desolate, when measured by the (in)existence of contemporary art collections, institutions, and infrastructure.

Along with other initiatives, such as the opening in 1964 of the Juana Mordó gallery, the creation of the museum played an essential role in the national and international recognition and promotion of these artists. And straightaway the existence of a space where the collection could be exhibited to the public had a strong, positive effect on Zóbel’s collecting. He writes that it made him think about the need to acquire a more complete representation of Spanish abstract art. In the following years, he continued to obtain works for the museum and was able to put together a collection where all the major Spanish abstract artists are well-represented. Some of the works from the collection were loaned to exhibitions organized in the 1960s by the Tate, Guggenheim, and MoMA, with considerable support from the Spanish government, including *New Spanish Painting and Sculpture*, curated by Frank O’Hara at MoMA in 1960.

Today, any attempt to imagine the country as it once was, devoid of the institutions the state has established for the conservation, encouragement, and dissemination of the arts is a quasi-exercise in “cultural fiction.” Everything that exists now and that we take for granted simply did not exist in Spain until the late 1980s and 1990s.

As far as the visual arts were concerned, Spain did not have a major national museum with a permanent collection of modern and contemporary art until the creation of the Museo Reina Sofía in 1988 and its opening to the public in 1990.<sup>11</sup> It did not have large, panoramic collections of twentieth-century art until the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza was officially inaugurated in October 1992. It did not have a suitable network of galleries for a European country with more than thirty-five million inhabitants and one of the world’s ten largest economies. It did not have even one major international contemporary art fair (Feria Internacional Arte Contemporánea was created in 1981, beginning its long road toward consolidation). With some exceptions, it did not have a tradition of public, private, or corporate collect-



ing; and though the state was still strongly centralized, it did not have the network of contemporary art museums and centers that exists today, including the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, established in 1987–88, the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, created in 1989, or the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (MUSAC), which opened in 2005;<sup>12</sup> these all came into place in the process of decentralization initiated through the political program in Spain that led to the establishment of the autonomous communities and transfer to them of responsibilities and funds for culture.

Of course, during that whole period, Spain, like its neighboring countries, did not lack artists and creators. Some lived in the country, others abroad, in exile, or as part of the diaspora, and were working in a wide diversity of creative fields. Some did so successfully: Tàpies, Chillida, Saura, and Oteiza, and others are just some of the figures who achieved international acclaim, along with groups such as Dau al Set, founded in Barcelona in 1948, and El Paso in Madrid, founded in 1957.<sup>13</sup> And then there was the presence of Spanish artists at the biennials of Sao Paulo and Venice, among others.

But when we instead look not at the works of individual creators but at the collective efforts of institutions, such as museums, everything changes. It is true that the artist's work is so often unknown and solitary, and in direct confrontation with institutions; but no artist wants his or her creations to be unknown masterpieces. Creation needs institutions the way a voice "needs" its echo; and creation without institutions is like a voice without echo, almost silent and without projection.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Significance of Cuenca (I): The First Contemporary Artists' Museum in Spain**

And this is where the creation of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español takes clear shape as a needed pioneer: Cuenca was the first echo and "loudspeaker" for contemporary art that was being made in Spain. Cultural autocracy in Spain was not so much characterized by the absence of Spanish artists in an international context, as by the fact that the average Spanish citizen was unaware of art's international context or the work of individual artists, because there were no institutions that made it visible or exhibited it. To understand this properly, it is important to remember that access to high quality reproductions and publications was not so easy then, with few foreign titles published in Spain and few illustrated catalogue raisonnés available. Public libraries and universities did not subscribe to important international journals and documentation centers or specialized libraries were scarce.<sup>15</sup>

The misfortune of art in Spain in the fifties, sixties, and seventies was not the fault of a lack of creative imagination, but rather the fault of institutions and "blessed continuity" (Eugenio d'Ors). The authentic Spanish cry of *¡Qué inventen ellos!* ("Let the others invent!") does not make sense in the present context: we Spaniards, whose culture was to be told among those who traditionally privileged imagination over memory, have "invented" adequately, but the country failed miserably at "institutionalizing" the arts, and channeling the support, dissemination, and conservation of what had been invented, in the creation of a favorable cultural environment that would give it continuity, multiply it into more creation, and articulate it as cultural training, education, and patrimony for all.

So the first answer to the question as to whether the significance of “the most beautiful small museum in the world” had been understood is the one Gustavo Torner gave in a 2006 interview, in a statement at once exact, obvious, and yet forgotten and cloaked in the fog of the limbo of history: that the museum was the only place (i.e., public place, even though the collection was paid for by Fernando Zóbel) in Spain where current art could be seen well and in a permanent fashion from 1966 until the inauguration of the Reina Sofía.<sup>16</sup>

And that is exactly the point: the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was created right within the context of a chronic, historic lack of modern and contemporary art institutions in Spain,<sup>17</sup> a shortage that began to be solved through private means. A simple list of these is enough to show that in Spain, modern and contemporary art were disseminated first through private rather than public initiative. And in Cuenca, it was artists (one individual and then a collective) who preceded managers and administrators in this exemplary display of will.<sup>18</sup>

In Spain, a country that is as long on imagination as it is short in memory, we have forgotten that the accidental tourist interested in contemporary art who would have visited this country before 1983 would have had to settle, just about, for a visit to the Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo on the university campus in Madrid (now the Museo del Traje), the Picasso Museum in Barcelona, or spaces such as the Casa-Museo Rafael Zabaleta, to cite a few worthy museums whose history, however, is very different from that of Cuenca.

It is important that these last fifty years do not erase the truth that in 1966, the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was a contemporary artists’ museum. The fact that many of them later passed into the canon of modern art made in Spain should not obscure their precocious youth. There is very little difference in the average age of the artists whose works entered the museum in Cuenca between 1966 and 1978 to the average age of those who have at least one work in the MUSAC, which sees itself as the museum of the present time: 37.8 years for the latter, and for the former, 39.6 in 1966 and 39.8 in 1978.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Significance of Cuenca (II): When an Institution Is Created by Artists (for the Public)**

A careful reading of the bibliography on art and its relationship to society in Spain from the 1950s to the 1980s—and this includes monographs and important studies by Ángel Llorente, Javier and Genoveva Tusell, María Dolores Jiménez Blanco, Miguel Cabañas, Jorge Luis Marzo, and Julián Díaz Sánchez; the seven volumes of the *Desacuerdos* project, a kind of “seven sacraments” on art, politics, and society; and the recent monumental *Arte y prácticas políticas en España* by Patricia Mayayo and Jorge Luis Marzo<sup>20</sup>—should surprise the reader, in how disappointingly short the amount of space it devotes to the adventure of the creation of the Cuenca museum is. There are numerous reasons why, more than sixty years after the adventure in Cuenca and Spain was begun by such an extraordinary figure as Zóbel, it has not been completely understood and is still subsumed in a fog of inaccuracy, but I am interested in dealing in particular with those reasons that, in my opinion, have clouded the

view of historians.

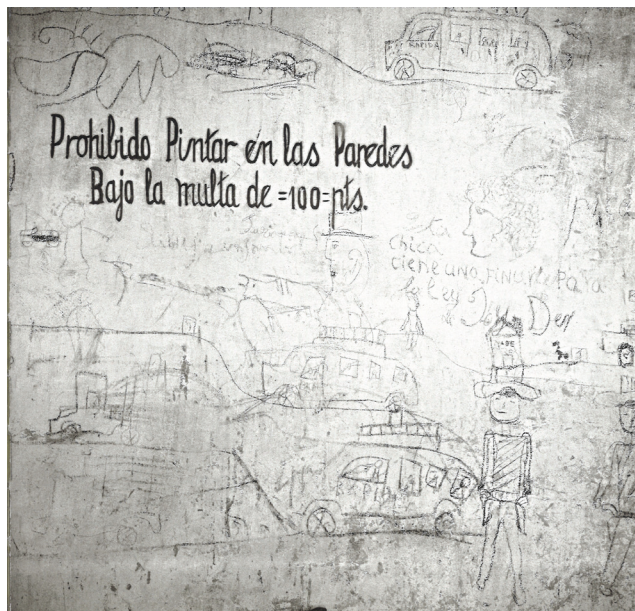
Recent art history in Spain has shifted between formalism and socio-political historiography, both of which ignore something I believe to be essential: the adoption of what can be called “the aesthetic point of view,” to balance out the more regular point of view of narrating the phenomena of the history of culture. This is the point of view of art, and of artists as producers of art. Of course some of the texts mentioned earlier constitute a type of research—as many of them began as doctoral theses—which are heavy on quantitative information but light on hermeneutics. Many authors also lack the traditional Anglo-Saxon ability to write history as if it were a novel. In others, there is a deficit of references to history compared with other countries and the international context. There is also in general not much interest in what happened outside of the main centers of Madrid and Barcelona. And lastly, attention to the cultural “exportation” of contemporary art in the Franco era has seemed to be of more interest than analysis of what happened within Spain, especially if it was occurring at the margins of the official culture of Franco’s regime and its policies, rather than directly opposing it.

Yet if I had to say why, along with a viewpoint that eschews reception, “the Cuenca case” as we can call it, has been given less weight than it merits in the story of artistic creation and social reality in the last quarter of the twentieth century in Spain, I would attribute it to an excess of political conscience over historical conscience in many cases. This excessive emphasis on politics has biased many of these narrations, with an ignorance I dare call “guilty,” toward the working and politically committed artists versus those who preferred to distinguish between their art and their political commitment or simply relinquished direct political action. I have written recently about Bill Viola’s work and his shift in socio-political discourse in the 1970s. Like so many artists around the world, and those who demonstrate what Alfonso de la Torre has called “the poetics of Cuenca,”<sup>21</sup> Viola departed from the prevailing ideals of social art and reconnected with the spiritual tradition in art, with religion and Christian, Zen, and Sufi mysticism. That decision must not have been easy, and to an extent, went against the current: from the 1970s on, social engagement in art weighed heavily, and there was a real possibility that artists who were not so permeated by social and political commitment could be “guilty of being innocent”<sup>22</sup> (in the words of the much-quoted and little-read Harold Rosenberg).

The second factor that obscures the significance of the invention of Cuenca in recent Spanish art history is what I believe to be the most common historiographic perspective on art and its relationship to social and cultural reality of the late Franco era and first decades of democracy: the fact that it has been told from the perspective of the artist and what he or she makes, and not from that of the public and what it receives. This explains why historians have been notably shortsighted in their estimation of initiatives defined as “artists doing things for the public,” which they interpret rather as artists “selling” their work or engaging in self-promotion.

Yet this is precisely the distinctive element of the history of the museum in Cuenca. The “magical” moment or year in Cuenca, 1966, comes from the simple fact that those who made the museum...

were artists. Cuenca was, ten years ahead of its time, what we now refer to as an “artist-run space”<sup>23</sup> (perhaps the best-known of these is Printed Matter, in New York). A space that was dreamt, imagined, desired, conceived, founded, sustained, financed, organized, and directed by artists, and not by administrators or politicians, by collectors or historians or patrons or academics. No. By artists. Privately and personally. By artists. Moreover, this was done *exclusively* by artists who “painted” on their own, once and for all an essential episode of recent art history on the empty walls of the institutions (fig. 7) of a country living under a non-democratic military regime.



7. Gustavo Torner, *Graffiti*, 1955.

### ***Amanece, que lo es todo* (“Dawn is everything”)**

I end these pages with a comparison to film. If in narrating these years some of the authors I have mentioned had chosen to write a screenplay instead of a history text (and thus had premiered a film instead of producing a book), what film would they have made?

I think that a story written about the socio-political adventures and misadventures of artists in Spain over the last fifty years would produce a Spanish movie that would be a mix of *La caza* (1966) and *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953). On the screen, we would have an extreme vision of the country and the cultural pettiness of the winners in the former mixed with the hilarious reality of a country that

is like an immense province that wants to develop and internationalize, as in the latter. All the while welcoming the American friend, which here would be a metaphor of international art and democratic cultural and political contexts.

But as a movie through which to understand the magic moment of the Cuenca museum, I prefer to suggest a tour de force of Spanish film that only on the surface is surrealist: *Amanece, que no es poco* (*Dawn Is No Small Thing*).<sup>24</sup> Just as in that screenplay, where the director has the two characters played by Luis Ciges and Antonio Resines ride a Vespa and sidecar into a village in La Mancha, which is also the land of Cuenca and el Quijote, where very strange things happen, the script of the true story of the foundation of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca would tell how two forty-something artists arrived in a provincial city in Spain in 1963 and made a proposal to the mayor (a supporter of Franco, providential and visionary) to create...a museum! Of abstract art! And in the city's most emblematic building! Financed and run by them! And not within the mainstream of official Franco politics and culture! And against all bets, the mayor and city council agree to the plan, and something was born that has now celebrated its fiftieth birthday, something that in its classic extravagance remains incredibly young.

### **The Invention of Cuenca**

Cuenca has played a role in the great change that Spain has experienced in recent decades, and this role requires its story to be told from the perspective of what artists did, beyond the mainstream of the official culture of the period and with the means at their disposal, for a public that had not tasted modernity and liberty for some time. The Museo de Arte Abstracto Español was and is, essentially, an artists' museum and a democratic museum, the first of its kind in Spain, twenty years ahead of the return to democracy that would begin in 1975. Soon these artists would further the democratization of modern taste the museum embodied with an ambitious program to produce works on paper: artists' books, print and silkscreen portfolios, as well as the museum's posters and postcards of its works. They began to "multiply" the originality of the works of artists and disseminate it throughout the rest of the country. The works on paper produced by the museum, the seeds of the Fundación Juan March collection, which continued the efforts to disseminate this work, and are currently exhibited by the McMullen Museum of Art, intensified the museum's democratic verve, creating a kind of itinerant museum without walls; and those multiplied works of art, originals in their own right, reached even further through acquisition and exhibition.

Along with a history of names that tells what artists make (works of art), there is a need for a history that narrates what artists do for their public, and in that history the chapter devoted to the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca could be the first one, could usher Fernando Zóbel into the history of Spain and remove the museum from the inaccuracies of that "Limbo culture" produced by an excessive attachment to ideology (and a perhaps politically guilty conscience) written about by Auden. That



a museum of abstract art dawned then in Cuenca was no small thing. And that it continues to dawn each day in the museum's galleries (fig. 8) is priceless and marvelous.



8. Current view of the large gallery of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca, with Antonio Saura's *Brigitte Bardot* (1959), Pablo Serrano's sculpture *Bóveda para el hombre* (1962) and, on the back wall, Manuel Millares's *Sarcófago para Felipe II* (1963).

- 1 For the best historical survey of the hanging houses, see Pedro Miguel Ibáñez Martínez, *Las Casas Colgadas de Cuenca y el Museo de Arte Abstracto Español* (Cuenca: Consorcio Ciudad de Cuenca/Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2016); also see *La ciudad abstracta: 1966; El nacimiento del Museo de Arte Abstracto Español*, exh. cat. (Cuenca: Museo de Arte Abstracto Español/Fundación Juan March, 2006).
- 2 In 1983 Cuenca inaugurated Spain's first Cabinet of Electroacoustic Music at the city's Conservatorio Profesional de Música, and in 1986 Cuenca opened its first Faculty of Fine Arts. For an overview of these two decades, see Juan Laborda Barceló, "Tiempos contemporáneos," in *Historia y Arte de Castilla-La Mancha* (Madrid: Art Duomo Global, 2017), esp. 78–87.
- 3 The museum is a unique example of "cultural management" in that the building belongs to the city and has been the public symbol of Cuenca since 1963, but its use and financing has been and remains in private hands.
- 4 The museum's interior is like a white cube in a labyrinthine, archaic space. Together with the whiteness of its walls and ceilings, which are typical of both the neutrality of the modern museum and vernacular archi-

ecture, there are details that have a mixture of sophistication and aristocratic restraint (or sparsity) which in my opinion is heavily indebted to the architecture of Carlo Scarpa. The museum is full of what Michael Cadwell calls “strange details.” See Caldwell, *Strange Details* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

- 5 See my “‘Todos los espacios y todos los tiempos...’: Una conversación con Gustavo Torner,” in *La ciudad abstracta*, 105–29. The story has also been told by two other exceptional witnesses: José María Yturralde and Jordi Teixidor, in Manuel Fontán del Junco, “Una conversación con Jordi Teixidor y José María Yturralde,” in *La pintura, el viaje, la contemplación: Fernando Zóbel, Jordi Teixidor, José María Yturralde*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Banca March, 2016), 159–85.
- 6 María Bolaños, “‘El futuro empieza hoy’: Los comienzos de un pequeño museo moderno,” in *La ciudad abstracta*, 44.
- 7 Alfonso de la Torre, “El Museo de Arte Abstracto Español: Cronología,” in *La ciudad abstracta*, 239.
- 8 The museum celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with three new publications: a portfolio of nine drawings selected from among the 133 sketchbooks Fernando Zóbel made between 1948 and 1984, a bilingual re-edition of *Cuenca: Sketchbook of a Spanish Hill Town*, originally published in 1970 by Harvard University as a compilation of drawings and texts about Cuenca by Zóbel, and the third edition of the museum’s guide and catalogue, in Spanish and English.
- 9 This was widely covered in the media and social networks: see, for example Esther G. Ramírez, “El Museo de arte abstracto de Cuenca afronta nuevos retos,” *Aena Arte* 39 (2016): 58–63.
- 10 For this reason, in November 2016 the museum presented *Venecia, 1962–Cuenca, 1966*, an exhibition about that meeting. Along with other artists, Zóbel and Torner had been selected in 1962 to represent Spain at the thirty-first Venice Biennale. The small exhibition looked at the years that went from their meeting in Venice to the creation of the museum, with works by both artists, archival material from Zóbel’s donation to the museum, photographs, and documents to recount an event that proved to be decisive for the history of contemporary art in Spain.
- 11 There is the precedent of the Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo (MEAC), on the campus of the Universidad Complutense, the last building inaugurated by Franco and that later became the Museo de Antropología (following a tradition that began, notably, under the republic) but which for many years housed the Museo Nacional de Reproducciones Artísticas. The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS) was created by royal decree 535/88 on May 27, 1988 in the former Hospital de San Carlos in Madrid, with works that had belonged to the MEAC. It opened to the public in 1990 for temporary exhibitions, and on September 10, 1993 the MNCARS permanent collection was dedicated by the king and queen of Spain.
- 12 Comparing the revised and expanded edition of Consuelo Sanz-Pastor and Fernández de Piérola, *Museos y Colecciones de España* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Dirección General de Bellas Artes, Archivos y Bibliotecas, Patronato Nacional de Museos, 1980) with *Museo de Museos: 25 Museos de Arte Contemporáneo en la España de la Constitución*, exh. cat. (Madrid: SECC, 2003), which celebrated twenty-five public, semi-public, and private contemporary art museums that had been created in Spain since the constitution of 1978, is a testament to the enormous growth in the field.
- 13 And before these, the Grupo Pórtico, founded in Zaragoza in 1947.
- 14 Of course, this is truer of the visual arts than other creative fields, such as literature, that do not have such a strong need for “structures” in the architectonic sense of the word.
- 15 Notably, the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca subscribed to art journals like *Derrière le Miroir*, *Art in America*, *Das Kunstwerk*, and *L’Œil* soon after its opening, which could be consulted in its library that

was open to the public.

- 16 Fontán del Junco, "Una conversación con Gustavo Torner," 129. Beginning in 1966, Cuenca had a colony of artists and a stimulating, free, and unofficial artistic environment. See the exhibition catalogues *La poética de Cuenca: 40 años después, 1964–2004*, with texts by Alfonso de la Torre and Juan Ramírez de Lucas (held at the Centro Cultural de la Villa, Madrid, November 25, 2004–January 16, 2005), and *Rueda, Torner, Zóbel: El grupo de Cuenca*, with texts by Alfonso de la Torre (held at the Centro Cultural "Casa del Cordón," Obra Social Caja de Burgos, April 30–June 27, 1998).
- 17 It is no accident that in 1981 the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español joined forces with one of the country's first private institutions, the Fundación Juan March. See De la Torre, "Cronología," 254–58.
- 18 See Manuel Fontán del Junco, "La imaginación pública de las instituciones privadas: Para entender la actividad institucional en las artes en la España de los años 80," in *Del futuro al pasado: Obras maestras del arte contemporáneo; 30 años*, exh. cat. (Zaragoza: Ibercaja, 2008), 112–39.
- 19 Whether the MUSAC collection will stand the test of historical consensus fifty years from now is yet to be seen.
- 20 See, among others, Gregorio Morán, *El cura y los mandarines: Historia no oficial del Bosque de los Letrado; Cultura y política en España, 1962–1996* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2014); Julián Díaz Sánchez, *El triunfo del informalismo: La consideración de la pintura abstracta en la época de Franco* (Madrid: Metáforas del Movimiento Moderno, 2000); Michelle Vergniolle Delalle, *La palabra en silencio: Pintura y oposición bajo el franquismo* (Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2008); Javier Tusell, *Arte, historia y política en España (1890–1939)* (Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, 1999); José Luis Marzo, *¿Puedo hablarle con libertad, excelencia?: Arte y poder en España desde 1950* (Murcia: Editorial Cendeac, 2010); Ángel Llorente Hernández, *Arte e ideología en el franquismo (1936–1951)* (Madrid: Editorial Visor, 1995); José Luis Marzo and Patricia Mayayo, *Arte en España (1939–2015): Ideas prácticas y políticas* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2015); and Uta M. Reindel and Gabriele Rivet, eds., "Spanien im Aufbruch," special issue, *Kunstforum International* 94 (Apr.–May 1988).
- 21 On this point, see *El grupo de Cuenca: Gerardo Rueda, Gustavo Torner, Fernando Zóbel, José Guerrero, Antonio Lorenzo, Manuel Hernández Mompó, Eusebio Sempere*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Fundación Caja Madrid, 1997) and *La poética de Cuenca: 40 años después, 1964–2004*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Área de las Artes, 2004), both edited by Alfonso de la Torre. My statement is definitely applicable to the poetics of Zóbel and Torner, for example, but not to the poetics of other informalists, such as Antonio Saura. A survey of Zóbel's personal library is telling in this regard: he read and annotated editions of W. H. Auden and Marshall McLuhan, and his devotion to T. S. Eliot was strong.
- 22 Harold Rosenberg, "Couch Liberalism and the Guilty Past," *Dissent* 2, no. 4 (Sept. 1955): 321.
- 23 See Gabriele Detterer and Maurizio Nannucci, eds., *Artist-Run Spaces: Nonprofit Collective Organizations in the 1960s and 1970s* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2011). For a survey of artist-run spaces in Germany, see Marina Gärtner, *Spaces Freie Kunsträume in Deutschland* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2016). An equivalent to these non-official institutions in the realm of publishing is the "no ISBN movement" and self-published books: see Bernhard Cella, Leo Findeisen, and Agnes Blaha, eds., *NO-ISBN: On Self-Publishing* (Cologne: Walther König, 2015).
- 24 *¡Bienvenido, Mister Marshall!* (1953) was directed by Luis García Berlanga and produced by Elías Querejeta. Carlos Saura directed *La caza* in 1966. In 1989, the Compañía de Aventuras Comerciales and Televisión Española (TVE) produced *Amanece, que no es poco*, directed by José Luis Cuerda.



# PLATES



## 1. Antonio Saura (1930–89), *Cocktail Party*, 1960 (48/100)

serigraph with collage on paper, 69 x 98 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1227G



**2. Antonio Saura (1930–89), *El velón goteaba sobre su traje de ceremonia* [The Candle Dripped on His Ceremonial Robe], 1962 (16/85)**

set of 10 5-color serigraphs on paper, 77.2 x 55 cm

from *Diversaurio* with text by José Ayllón

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0990G





**3. Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012), *El pa a la barca* [The Bread on the Boat], 1963 (48/110)**

set of 22 lithographs and collages on Guarro paper, 72 x 104 cm

text by Joan Brossa

publisher: Sala Gaspar, Barcelona

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1144G



**4. Gerardo Rueda (1926–96), *Al horizonte* [To the Horizon], 1964 (?/80)**

6-color serigraph on paper, 37.2 x 27 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0827G



**5. Gerardo Rueda (1926–96), *Azul y rojo* [Blue and Red], 1964 (55/80)**

2-color serigraph on paper, 32.9 x 24 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0821G



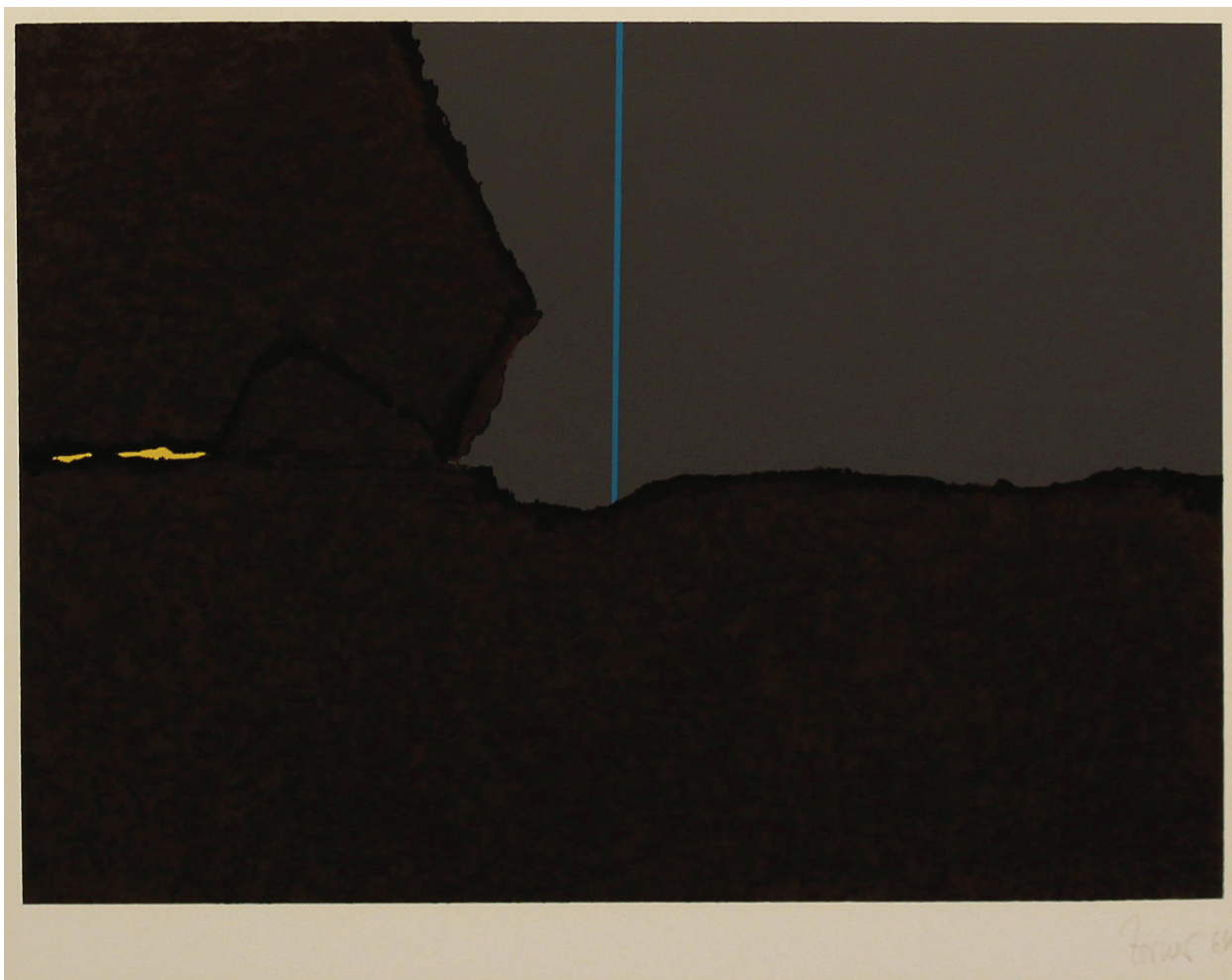


**6. Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), *Sin título*, 1964 (?/80)**

serigraph and oil on paper, 37.9 x 31 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0719G





**7. Gustavo Torner (1923–), *Sin título*, 1964 (?/80)**

serigraph on paper, 27.3 x 37 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0798G

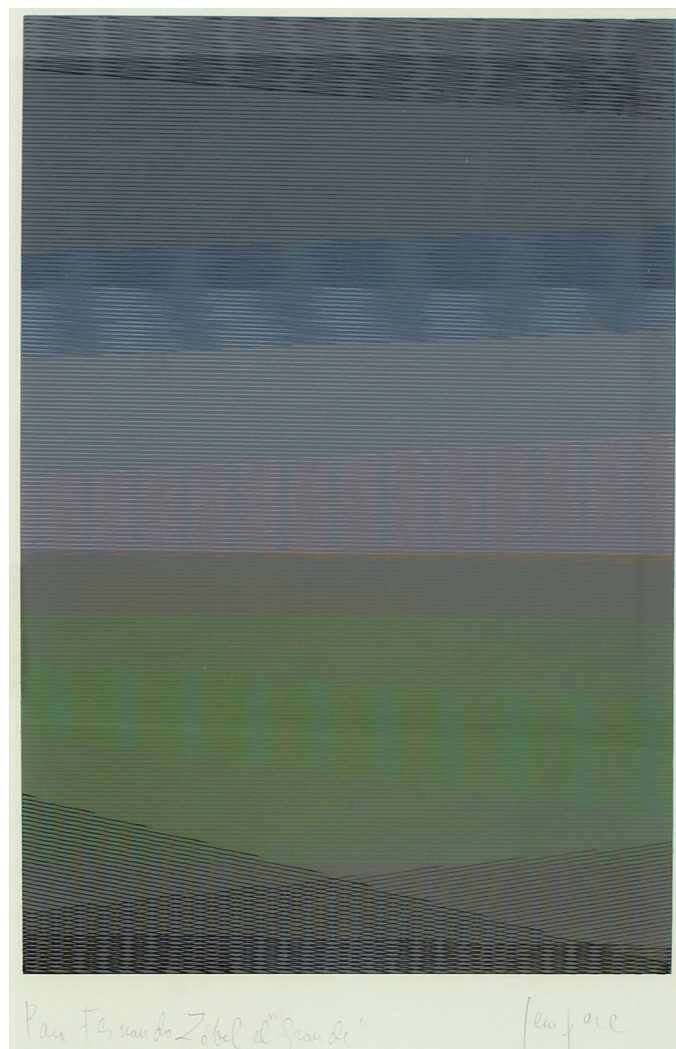


**8. José Guerrero (1914–91), *Sin título*, 1964 (60/200)**

lithograph on paper, 51.5 x 38 cm

text by José Luis Fernández del Amo

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0902G

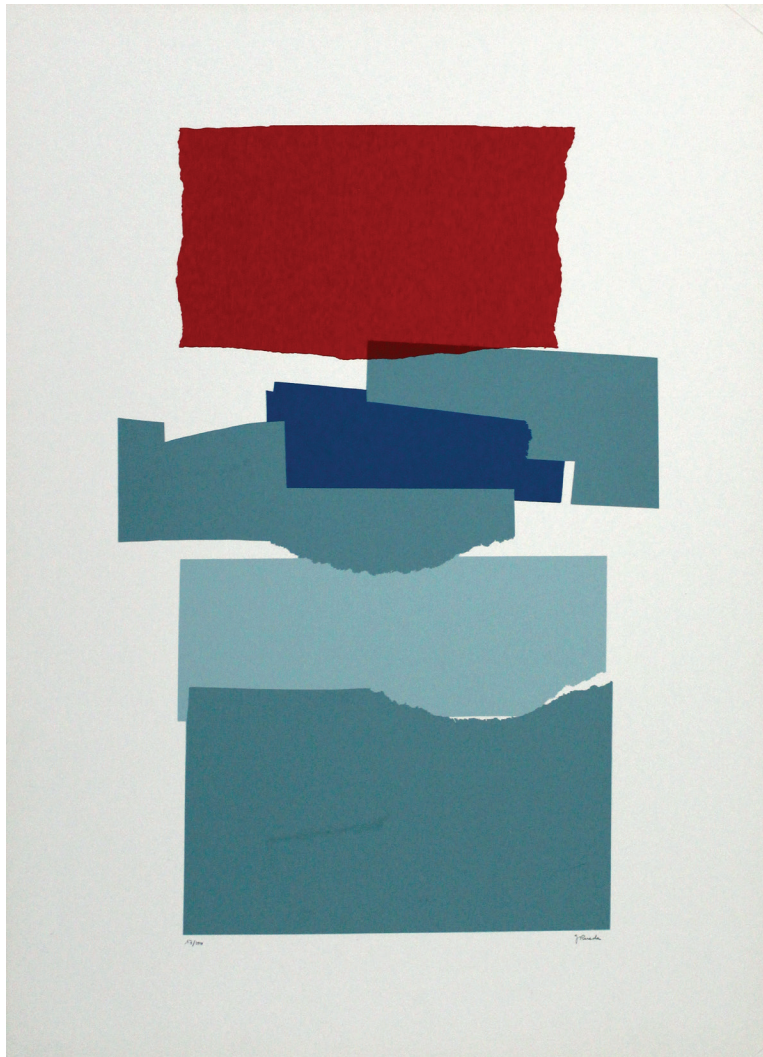


**9. Eusebio Sempere (1923–85), *Sin título (Paisaje para el Museo de Cuenca)* [Landscape for the Cuenca Museum], 1964 (?/80)**

serigraph on paper, 37.3 x 27.2 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0820G

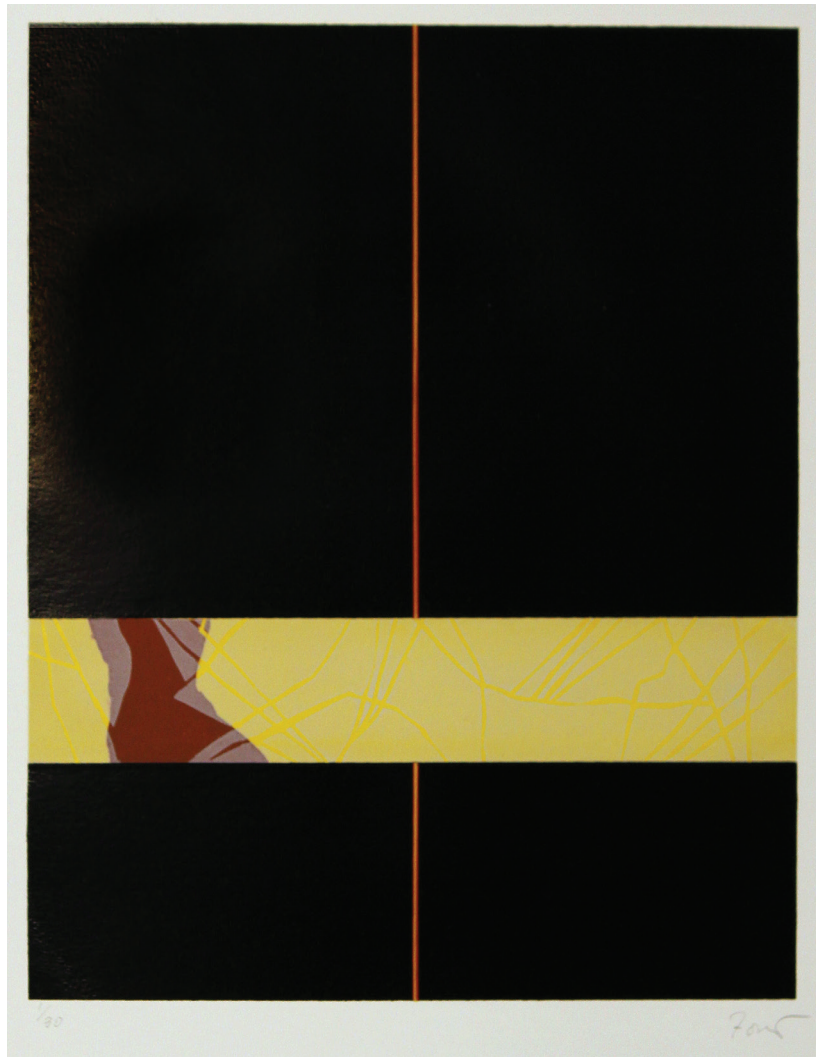




**10. Gerardo Rueda (1926–96), *Collage*, 1965 (17/100)**

4-color serigraph on Somerset paper, 59.9 x 43.5 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0830G



**11. Gustavo Torner (1923–), *Heráclito* [Heraclitus], 1965 (1/30)**

set of 9 serigraphs on paper, 37.5 x 29 cm

text by Heraclitus

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1152G



**12. Manuel Millares (1926–72), *Mutilados de paz* [Mutilated by Peace], 1965 (51/100)**

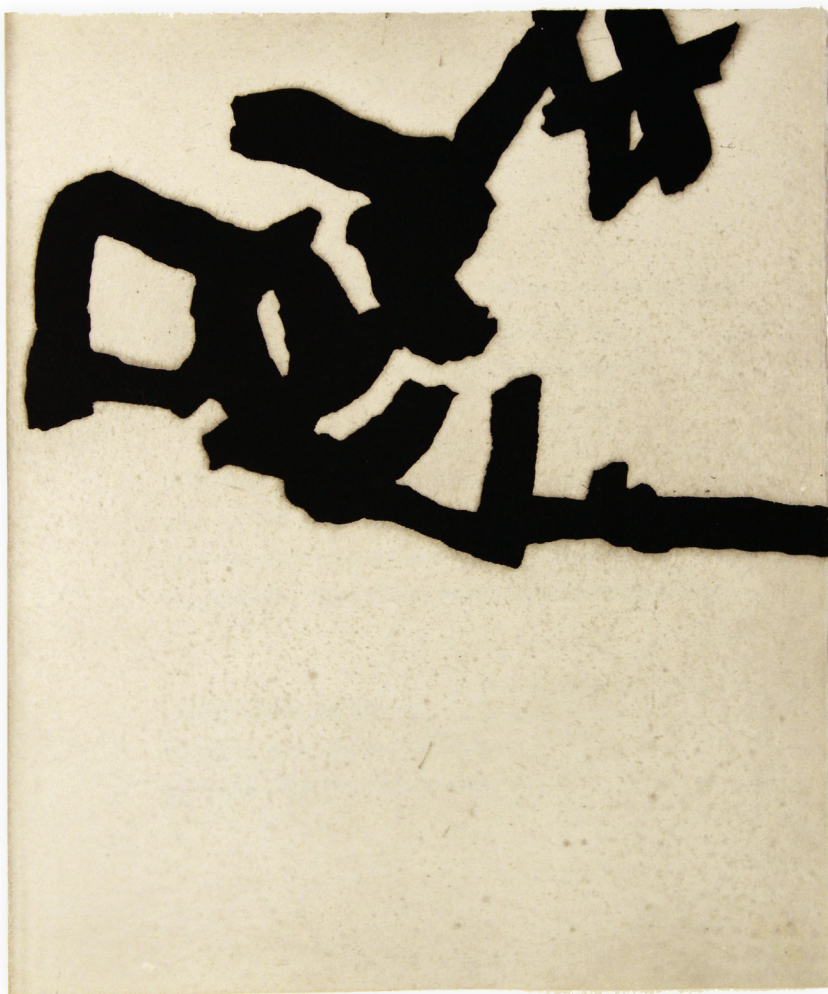
set of 4 serigraphs on Guarro paper, 72 x 52 cm

text by Rafael Alberti

publisher: Artes Gráficas Luis Pérez, Madrid

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1180G





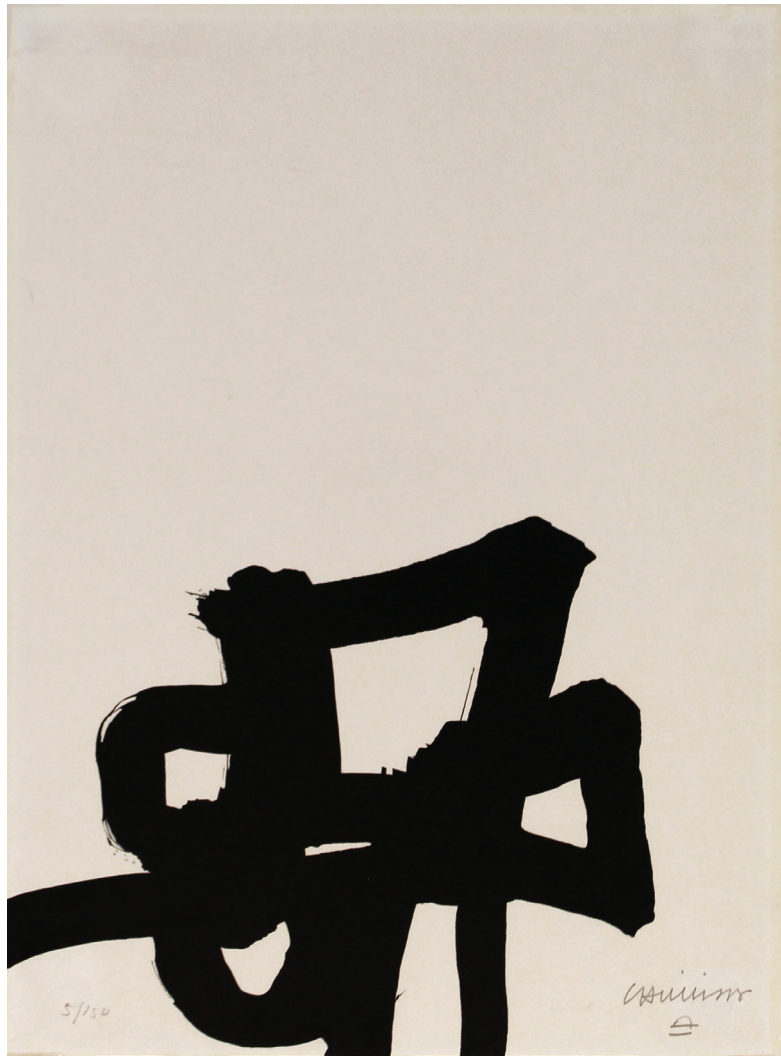
**13. Eduardo Chillida (1924–2002), *Le chemin des devins, suivi de Ménerbes* [The Path of the Diviners, Followed by Ménerbes], 1965 (124/175)**

set of 10 etchings and aquatints on Arches paper, 38.8 x 32 cm

text by André Frénaude

publisher: Maeght, Paris

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1069G



**14. Eduardo Chillida (1924–2002), *Sin título*, n.d. (5/150)**

lithograph on Guarro paper, 37.8 x 28 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0867G



**15. Joan Hernández Pijuan (1931–2005), *Las celdas* [Cells], 1966–67 (27/35)**

set of 5 lithographs on Arches paper, 52 x 67.7 cm

publisher: Gustavo Gilli, Barcelona

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1088G





**16. Manuel Millares (1926–72), *Auto de fe* [Act of Faith], 1967 (2/20)**  
drypoint on Japanese paper, 38.5 x 29 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0270G

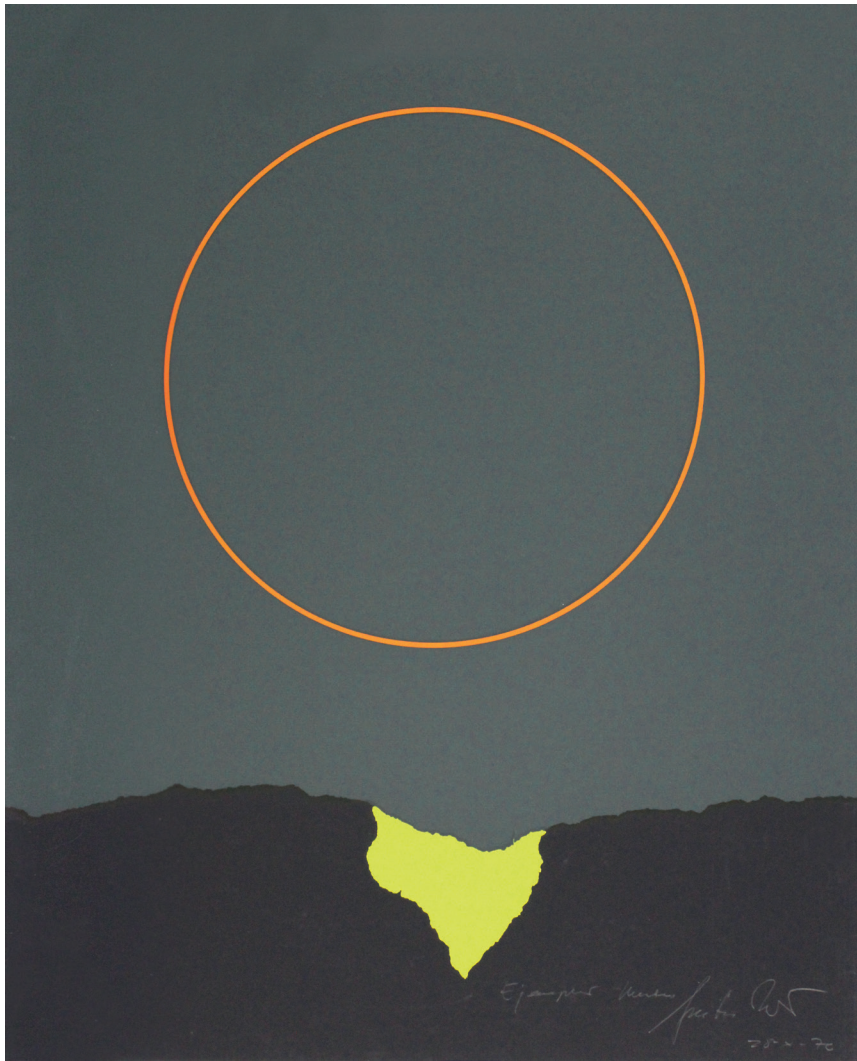


**17. Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012), *Fregoli*, 1969 (58/100)**

lithograph on Gaspar Guarro paper, 76.7 x 56 cm

text by Joan Brossa

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1002G



**18. Gustavo Torner (1923–), *Verde oscuro, negro y amarillo con circunferencia roja II* [Dark Green, Black, and Yellow with Red Circumference II], 1970 (A/P 500)**

4-color serigraph on paper, 74.2 x 60 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0795G





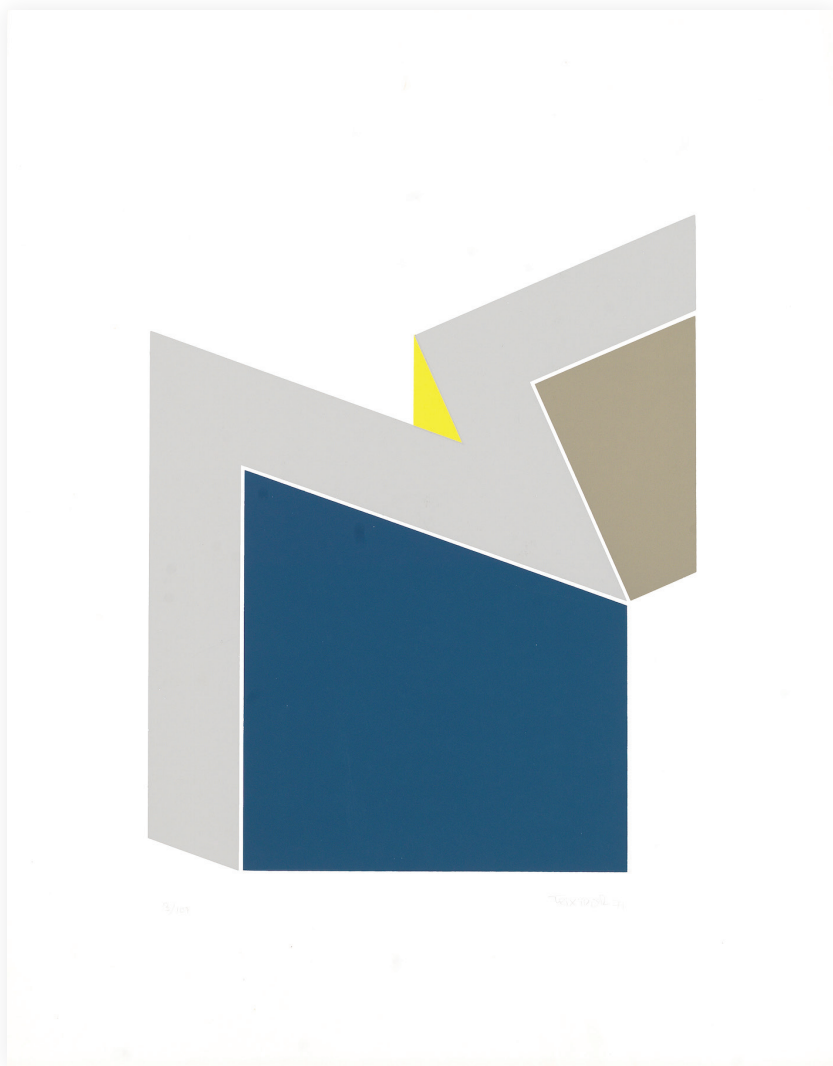
**19. Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012), *Nocturn matinal* [Nocturnal Morning], 1970 (89/100)**

set of 31 lithographs and 1 etching, 46.8 x 68 cm

text by Joan Brossa

publisher: Polígrafa, Barcelona

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1145G



**20. Jordi Teixidor (1941–), *Sin título*, 1970 (32/60)**

3-color serigraph on paper, 31 x 23 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1011G



**21. Jordi Teixidor (1941–), *Sin título*, 1971 (3/101)**

4-color serigraph on paper, 65.3 x 50 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1005G



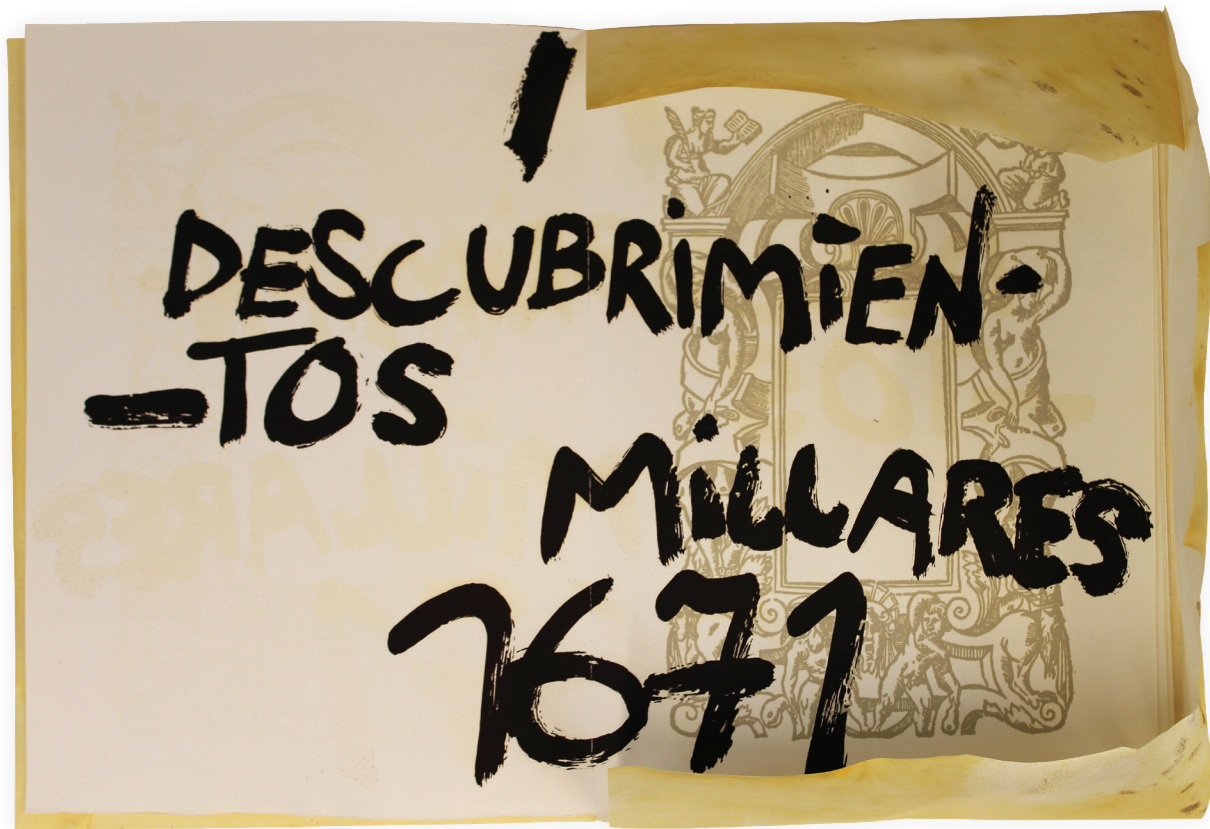
**22. Antonio Saura (1930–89), *Quevedo: Trois visions* [Quevedo: Three Visions], 1971 (7/37)**

set of 40 lithographs on paper, 56.5 x 37.6 cm

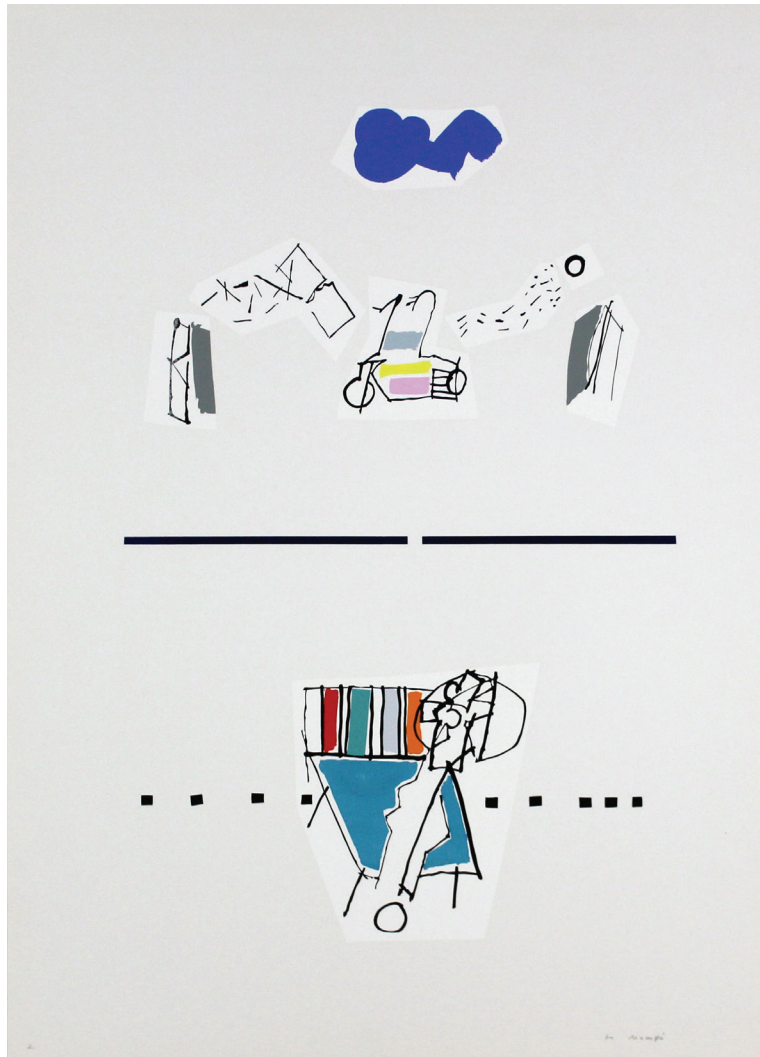
publisher: Yves Rivière, Paris

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1230G





**23. Manuel Millares (1926–72), *Descubrimiento en Millares 1671* [Discovery in Millares 1671], 1971 (1/65)**  
set of 12 serigraphs on Guarro paper, 64 x 108 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0268G

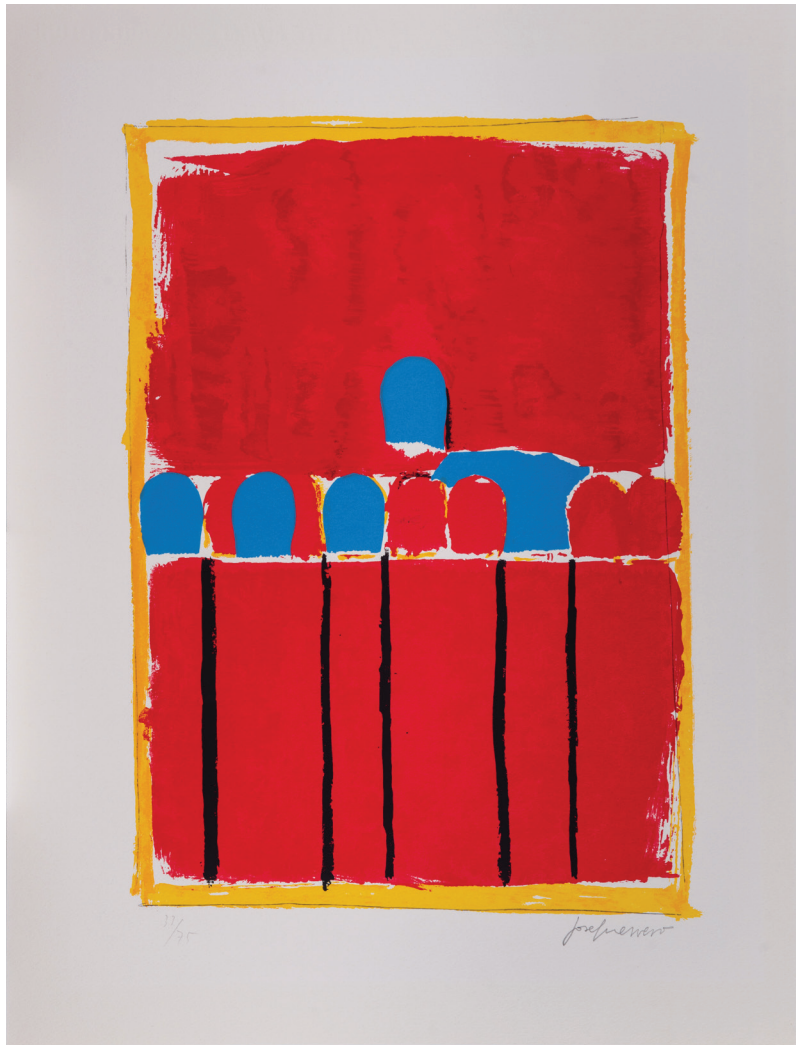


**24. Manuel Hernández Mompó (1927-92), *Seis escenas cotidianas* [Six Quotidian Scenes], 1971 (?/100)**

set of 6 serigraphs on paper with texts by the artist, 51.5 x 37 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1124G





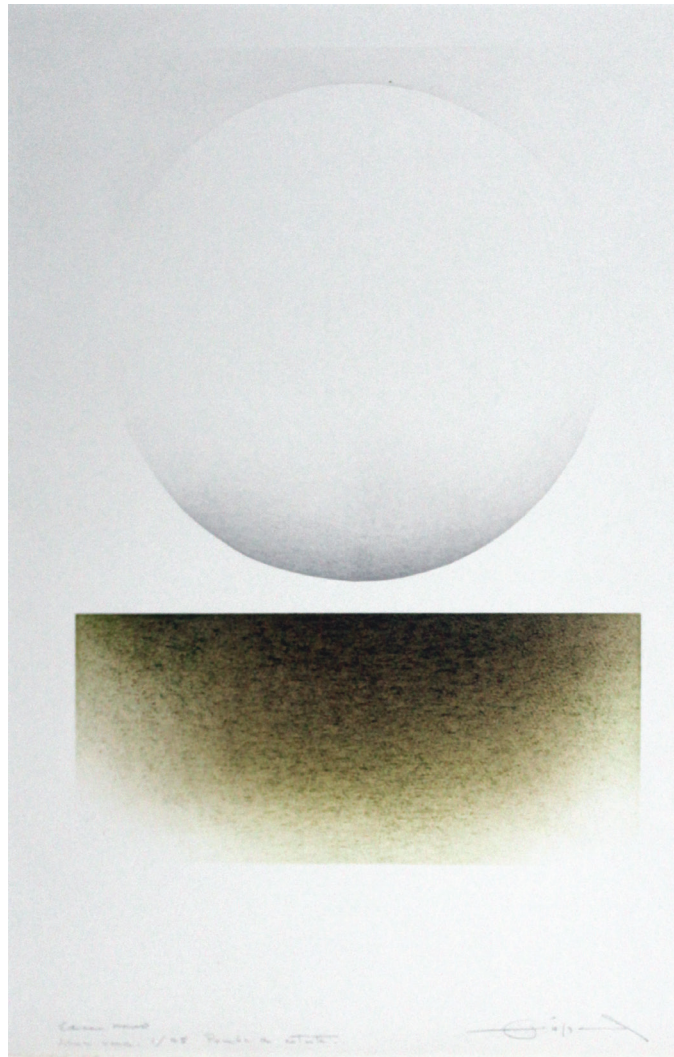
**25. José Guerrero (1914-91), *Fosforencias [Matchsticks]*, 1971 (33/75)**

set of 6 serigraphs on Fabriano paper, 65.3 x 50 cm

text by Stanley Kunitz

editor: Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, in collaboration with Juana Mordó

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1083G



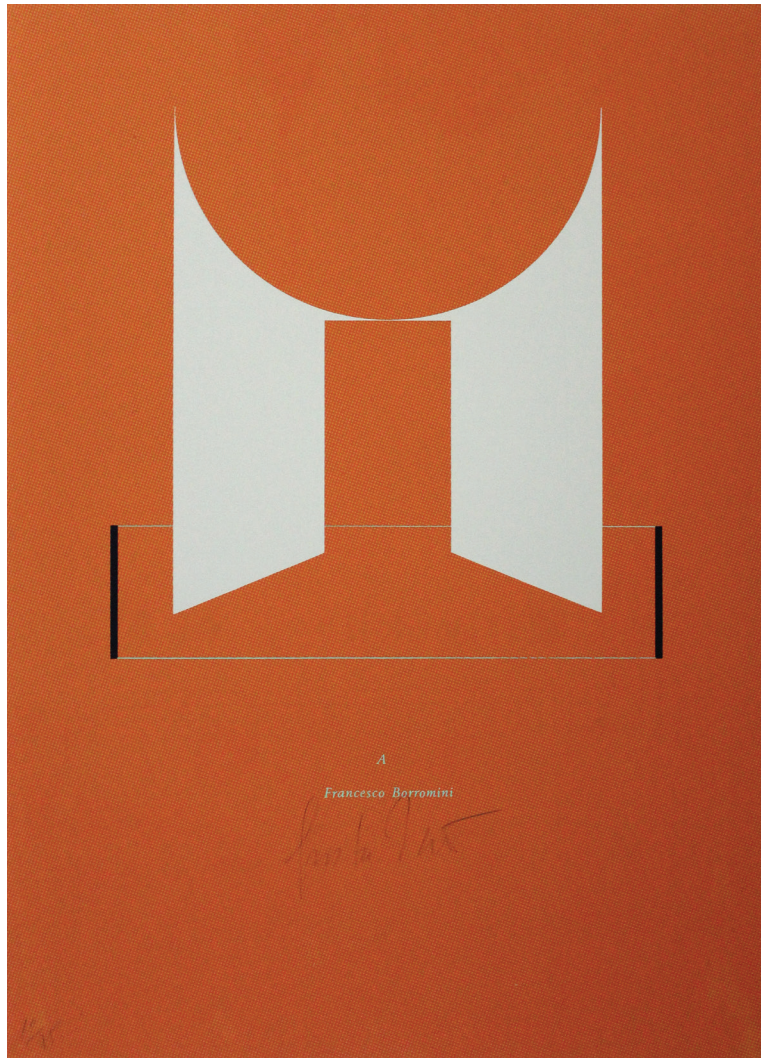
**26. Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), *Luna verde* [Green Moon], 1972 (A/P 1/75)**

oil screenprint on paper, 56.5 x 38 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0703G



**27. Pablo Palazuelo** (1916–2007), *Lunariae [Moonstones]*, 1972 (22/150)  
set of 8 aquatints on Richard de Bas paper, 65.2 x 50 cm  
text by Max Hölzer  
publisher: Maeght, Paris  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1126G

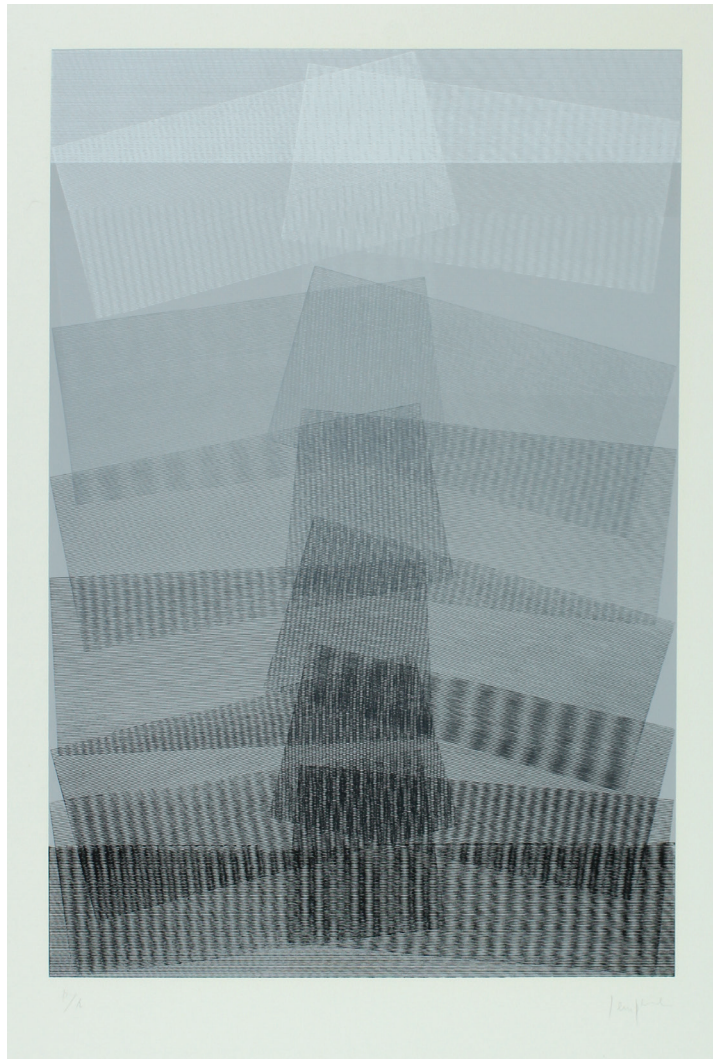


**28. Gustavo Torner (1923–), VIII. A Francesco Borromini. Carpeta Sur-Geometries [To Francesco Borromini: Portfolio South-Geometries], 1972 (10/75)**

set of 6 5-color serigraphs on paper, 69.2 x 50.1 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1218G

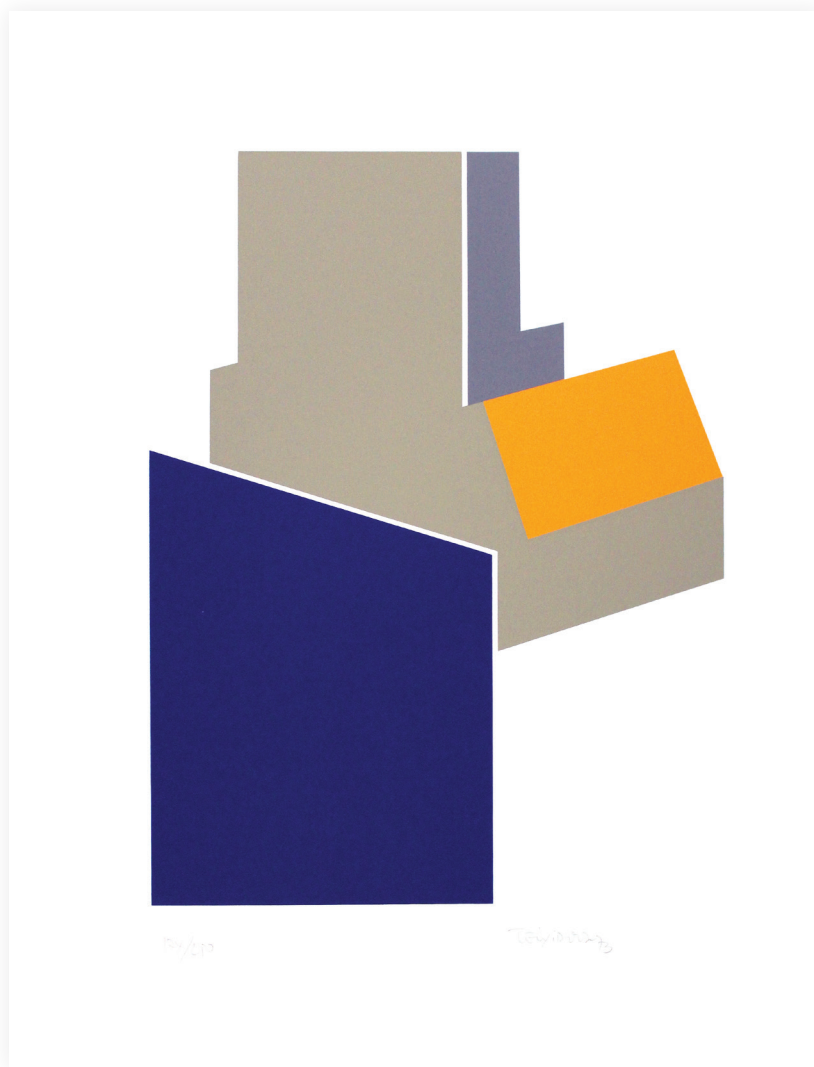




**29. Eusebio Sempere (1923–85), *Sin título*, 1973 (A/P 100)**

serigraph on cardboard, 65 x 50 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0816G



**30. Jordi Teixidor (1941–), *Sin título*, 1973 (174/250)**

4-color serigraph on paper, 65 x 50 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1006G



**31. Jordi Teixidor (1941–), *Dos cuartetos* [Two Quartets], 1974 (1/50)**  
serigraph on paper, 54.7 x 39 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1151G

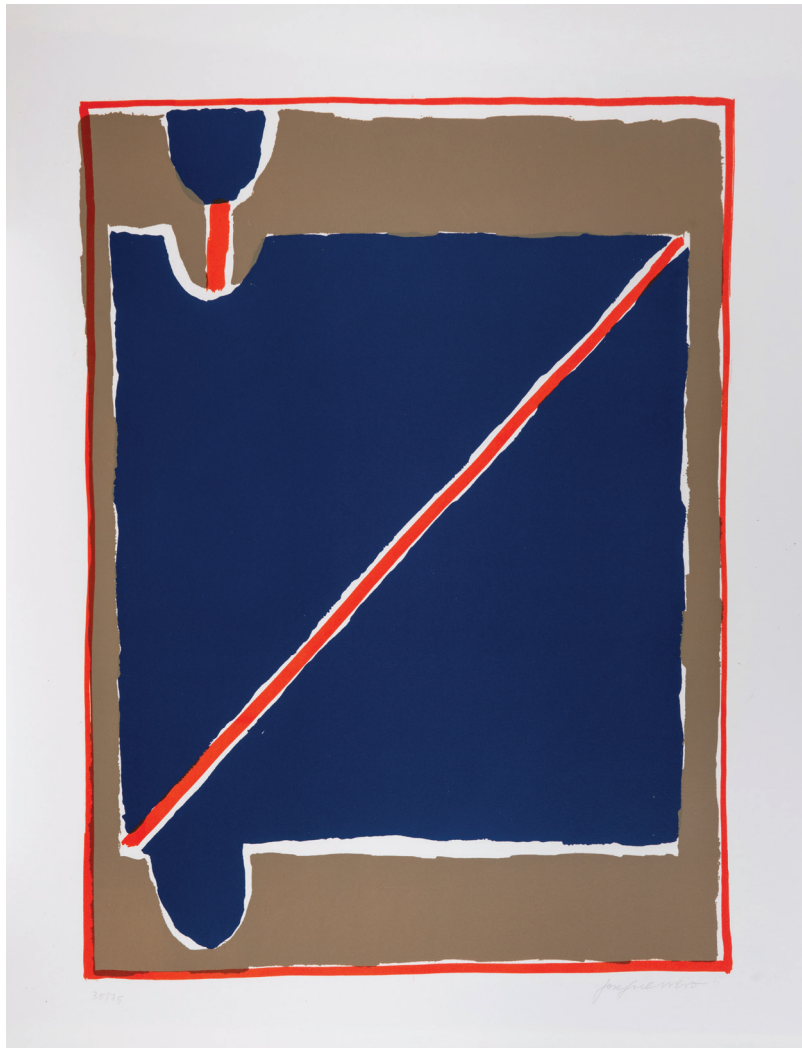


**32. Eusebio Sempere** (1923–85), ***Sin título***, 1975 (1/75)  
serigraph on black Canson paper, 64.7 x 50 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0810G





**33. Eusebio Sempere (1923–85), *Sin título*, n.d. (158/200)**  
serigraph on black Canson paper, 64.5 x 49.5 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0811G

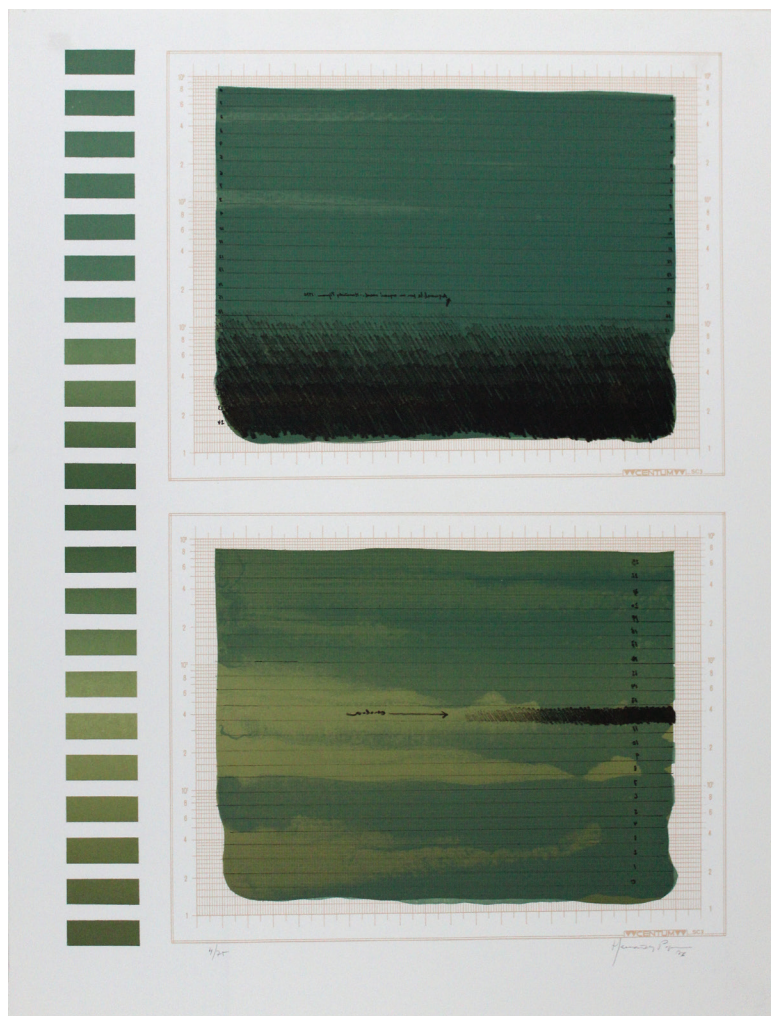


**34. José Guerrero (1914–91), *El color en la poesía* [The Color in Poetry], 1975 (35/75)**

set of 6 lithographs on BFK Rives paper, 66.4 x 54 cm

texts by Rafael Alberti, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Federico García Lorca, Jorge Guillen, Stanley Kunitz, and Pablo Neruda

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1087G



**35. Joan Hernández Pijuan (1931–2005), *Proyectos para un paisaje n° 1* [Projects for a Landscape No. 1], 1976 (4/75)**

lithograph and photolithograph on BFK Rives paper, 75.9 x 56 cm

text by José Ayllón

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1084G





**36. Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), *Nazario*, 1977 (1/360)**

11-color serigraph and process engraving on Guarro Geler paper, 100 x 72 cm  
Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 0746G



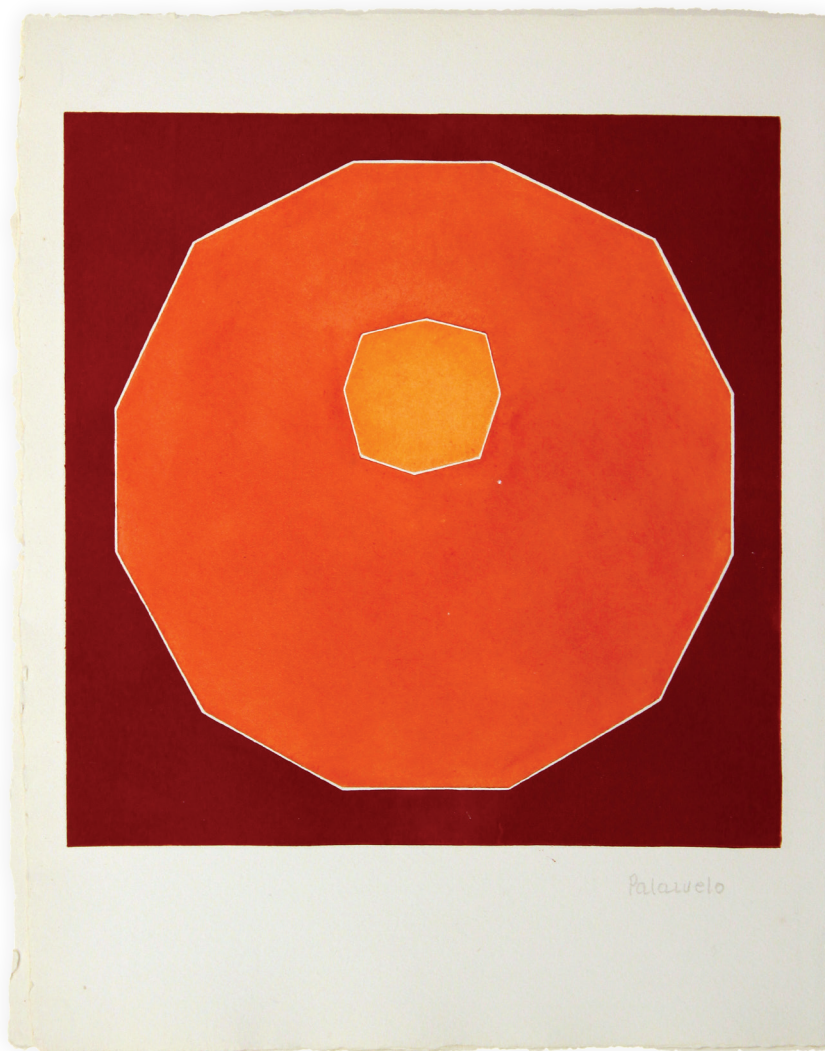


**37. Pablo Palazuelo (1916–2007), *Sigilla IV*, 1977 (39/75)**

set of 11 engraved aquatints on Arches paper with watercolor, 91 x 63 cm

editor and printing studio: Maeght, Paris

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1224G



**38. Pablo Palazuelo (1916–2007), *Ardicia*, 1978 (91/125)**

set of 3 prints, red chalk on tinted laid paper, 34.5 x 27.5 cm

text by José-Miguel Ullán

publisher: RLD, Paris

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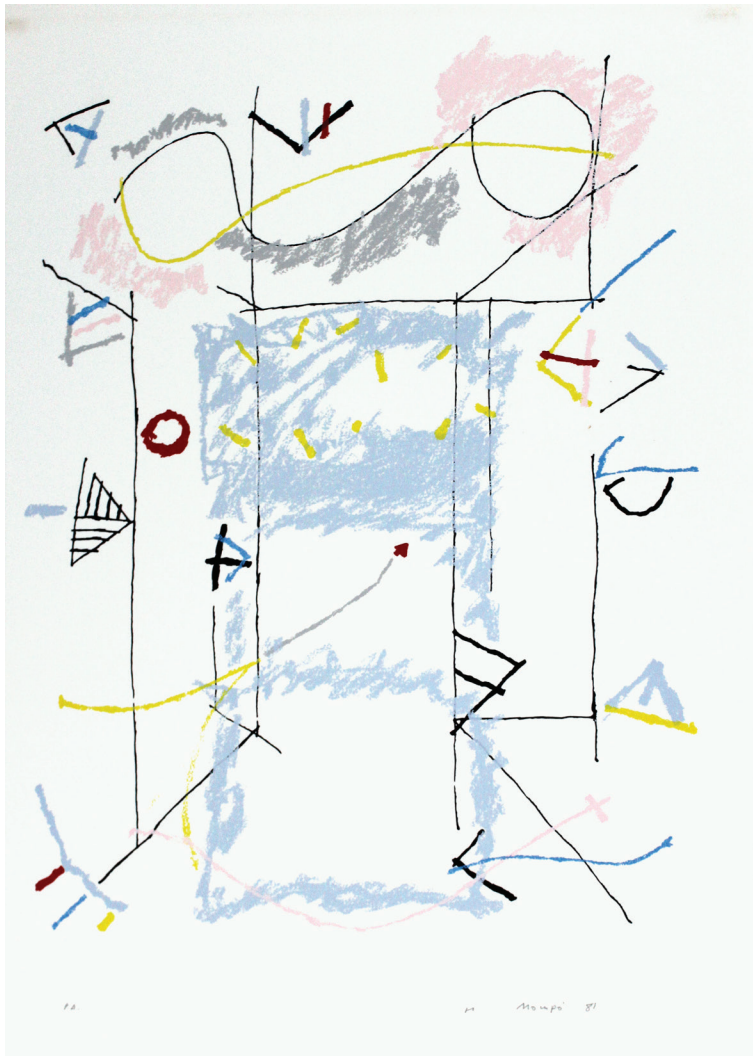


**39. Fernando Zóbel (1924–84), *Triana II*, 1981 (1/460)**

serigraph on paper, 73.6 x 68.2 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1222G





**40. Manuel Hernández Mompó (1927-92), *Puerta abierta* [Open Door], 1981 (A/P)**

color lithograph on Guarro paper, 77 x 56 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1201G





**41. José María Yturralde (1942–), *Estructura* [Structure], 1989 (211/460)**

serigraph on paper, 85.5 x 63 cm

Colección Fundación Juan March, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca, 1571G

Elizabeth Thompson Goizueta teaches Hispanic Studies in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Boston College. Her research interests focus on the relationship between art and literature in twentieth-century Latin America and Spain. She works closely with the McMullen Museum to promote Latin American art, where she curated and edited the catalogues for *Rafael Soriano: The Artist as Mystic / El artista como místico* (2017), *Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds* (2014, published in Spanish in 2016), and *Matta: Making the Invisible Visible* (2004). Thompson Goizueta also curated the McMullen installation of *Esteban Lisa: The Abstract Cabinet* (2017).

Since 2006 Manuel Fontán del Junco has been director of museums and exhibitions at the Fundación Juan March, and director of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, Cuenca and the Museu Fundació Juan March, Palma. He and the FJM collaborated with the McMullen Museum on the exhibition *Esteban Lisa: The Abstract Cabinet* in 2017. Fontán del Junco has a PhD in philosophy and has organized, directed, or curated more than fifty exhibitions on modern and contemporary art. He has written several publications on aesthetics and art theory and has translated into Spanish texts by Boris Groys, Martin Heidegger, Paul Klee, and Peter Sloterdijk.