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Introduction: Cold (War) Embraces: Spanish-American Exchanges 1945-1990

By Claudia Hopkins (University of Edinburgh) and Javier Ortiz-Echagüe (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos III)

In September 1983, Andy Warhol attended the singer-songwriter Julio Iglesias's 40th birthday party in New York. There were a lot of cameras, but that was irrelevant, because, as Warhol put it, "everybody said it was (*laughs*) just Spanish television". Warhol was fascinated by the magnetic figure of Iglesias, who had sold millions of albums and risen to international stardom:

Julio Iglesias looks different than in pictures. He's 6'3" and very handsome with a very dark tan, and teeth that are practically fluorescent. He was very friendly as if he really knew me.¹

This entry in Warhol's *Diary* is interesting, considering that he had visited Madrid in 1981 on the invitation of Fernando Vijande, one of the first Spanish gallery owners to exhibit American artists in Spain after the death of Francisco Franco. On the occasion of that visit, parties were organized, and Warhol was able to visit the Prado Museum but did not bother to look at anything, except for "a guy who was making a copy, and he loved it".²

There is no trace of this visit to the Spanish capital remains in his diaries, and he was clearly more drawn to Spanish VIPs than to its old masters. However, many Madrid artists considered Warhol's visit a key event in their careers, not so much because of the works they were able to see at the Vijande Gallery, but because of the artist's personality, who showed them an attitude to adopt. One of the most explicit testimonies of Warhol's impact on sections of Spain's art scene is the following statement by the filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar: "When I

read Edie Sedgwick's memoir I understood that, ten years later, certain circles in Madrid were identical to certain circles in New York. Vicious circles without exit, you understand".³

This anecdote illuminates a significant aspect in the cultural relations between Spain and the United States at the end of the Cold War. While private gallery owners were trying to establish links with the New York market, Madrid was not a very interesting place for someone like Warhol. He was nevertheless fascinated by the New York parties of Julio Iglesias, who was then in the midst of his campaign for the "conquest of America".⁴

This issue of *Art in Translation* aims to address, from different points of view, the artistic relations between Spain and the United States during the Cold War. The impulse for this publication is the conference *Cold (War) Embraces: Spanish-American Exchanges 1945-1990*, jointly organized by Durham University's Zurbarán Centre for Spanish and Latin American Art and the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos at the Juan March Foundation in October 2022 in Madrid. Generously funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art, it was one of five events across Southern and Eastern Europe that addressed and developed the insights gained from the *Art in Translation*-research and translation project and its outcome, the two-volume book on European Writing on American Art 1945-1990 *Hot Art, Cold War* (2020).⁵ This groundbreaking anthology on the reception of US art in Cold War Europe enables readers for the first time to compare the many ways in which art writers from both sides of the Iron Curtain presented American art to their diverse audiences. On one hand, the primary texts affirmed previous assertions that the dissemination of American Art after World War Two was a form of US propaganda to promote American values, especially in the context of the circulating exhibitions of the 1950s, organised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. On the other hand, the books revealed an uneven and nuanced picture, showing that American art arrived at different times in different countries and generated different debates, which have to be understood against the shifting political landscapes in Europe. Art writers

not only brought varying political, social, and aesthetic attitudes to US culture, but they also had varying degrees of access to it, which in turn framed and determined their responses to the transatlantic impulses. For example, within the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal and Spain were under dictatorial regimes until 1974 and 1975 respectively but held contrasting attitudes to the US. Although Portugal had (reluctantly) accepted US aid in 1952 and granted the US a military base on Portuguese soil, but cultural relations did not flourish. US art was not shown in Portuguese museums and galleries until the 1970s. In neighbouring Spain, by contrast, access to American art and culture was facilitated under Franco's dictatorship by the political rapprochement between Spain and the US in the early 1950s, which ended Franco's isolationist politics and consolidated his dictatorship on the international stage. This coming together hinged on the "Pact of Madrid", signed by the US and Spain in 1953 after several years of negotiations, which granted the US four military bases in Spanish territories in return for much needed military and economic aid.

The title *Cold (War) Embraces* of this volume of *Art in Translation* refers to the famous photograph showing US President Dwight D. Eisenhower embracing Franco at the end of his visit to Spain in 1959, on the Torrejón air base, one of the rewards of the "Pact of Madrid". The image (*Fig. 1 President Dwight D. Eisenhower and General Francisco Franco, 1959. Photograph*) was often reproduced in Spain to promote the popular idea of a US-Spanish friendship. *The Surrender of Torrejón* (Figure 2. Equipo Crónica, *The Surrender of Torrejón*, 1970. Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm. Fundación Suñol, Barcelona. Image: Fund. Suñol, Barcelona) by the art collective Equipo Crónica—made up of Manuel Valdés, Rafael Solbes and Juan Antonio Toledo—conflates this photograph with Diego Velázquez' famous *The Surrender of Breda* (*Fig. 3 Diego Velázquez, The Surrender of Breda, 1634-35. Oil on canvas, 307 x 367 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado*), a courteous exchange between a victorious Spanish general and a defeated Dutchman in the early seventeenth-century. Equipo Crónica's version reproduces the historical image with flat colours and simplified forms, in a style

reminiscent of American Pop art, but it is not a literal copy of Velázquez' image. In fact, the roles are reversed: it is the Spanish side on the left that surrenders, where Velázquez's defeated Dutchmen have been transformed into comic-strip figures and characters of twentieth-century Spanish popular culture. On the right, the Americans are not only recognizable by the flag but also because Velázquez' historical characters have become soldiers from the Vietnam War or cowboys from Hollywood Westerns. The title indicates the sense of the role reversal: it is now the Spaniards who are surrendering to the new empire, handing over the Torrejón air base to the US. Parodying the work of the old Spanish masters, who were exalted by Franco's cultural politics, Equipo Crónica thus makes an ironic commentary on the political situation of the present, and on the international weakness of Franco's Spain, which was presented by official propaganda as "great" and "free".

Equipo Crónica's response was not an isolated case. The shifting nature of Spanish-US relations registers in the production of art, architecture, and visual culture in these years. The excitement that ordinary Spaniards felt about the prospect of American aid is the subject of Luis García Berlanga's comedy *Bienvenido Mr Marshall!* (1952-53), a parodical portrayal of the inhabitants of a Castilian village, who devote all their time to the preparation of an Andalusian-style welcoming fiesta for a US delegation, only to be disappointed when they pass through the village all too quickly.⁶ Spanish architects from the Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos made modernist buildings in New York the object of their critical discussion, especially the UN headquarters in New York, designed by a team led by Wallace Harrison,⁷ which they analyzed in their magazine *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*.⁸ In 1953, an exhibition accompanying the *Congress of Abstract Art (Congreso Internacional de Arte Abstracto)* in Santander (Palacio de la Magdalena, August 1–10, 1953) included artworks by US artists, Ellsworth Kelly and Helen Frankenthaler, alongside French and Spanish Informel artists. A landmark event, it was described in the press as an "official acceptance of abstract art" in Franco's Spain,⁹ which had emerged in various groups, such Grupo Pórtico (1947–

1950), the School of Altamira (1948–1951), and Dau-al-Set in Barcelona. By 1955, modern art became a site for international diplomacy. In 1955, in the same year that Spain gained membership of the United Nations, Barcelona hosted Spain's first large-scale display of modern US art and architecture (*El arte moderno en los Estados Unidos*, Palau de la Virreina and Museu de arte moderne), a touring exhibition organized by the International Program of the US Information Agency and previously been shown in other cities, such as Paris and Zurich. It took place at the same time as the *III Bienal Hispanoamericana de arte*, a display of Spanish and Latin American art, organized by Franco's Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Barcelona. The US organizers exploited this coincidence. In the catalog of the US American display, the MoMA director René d'Harnoncourt pointed to the strength of contemporary art "of these two brother nations", Spain and the US. The notion of a brotherhood struck a familiar note with Francoist "Hispanidad", a concept that encapsulates the idea of a shared heritage and Spanish-speaking community, linking Spain with its former colonies in the Americas. D'Harnoncourt indirectly extended this idea to North America by stating that Spain represented, "alongside England and France, one of the three sources of our historical past."¹⁰ As evidence for Spanish-US ties he listed Spanish place names in the US (Sierra Nevada etc.) recalling Spain's historical presence in parts of the US; he also pointed to MoMA's efforts in disseminating modern Hispanic art in the US in modern times and ended with the general conclusion that the US had "special ties to old Spain."¹¹ A museum director-cum-diplomat, he avoided addressing the fundamental difference between both countries in the present: a democracy versus a dictatorship. Subsequent exhibitions also served to mask this major difference and consolidate Spanish-American relations, as exemplified by the 1958 *New American Painting* in Madrid, a touring exhibition organised by New York's Modern Museum of Art across eight European cities. In those years, American film producers such as Samuel Bronston set up studios in Spain, attracted by the country's recent international

openness. This was another factor that encouraged the American presence and turned Spain in the 1960s into a major film centre.¹²

The process was not, however, one-sided. Franco's regime also mobilized Spanish abstract art in international and national contexts. When Eduardo Chillida was awarded the Grand Prize for Sculpture and Antoni Tàpies the UNESCO prize at the 29th Venice Biennale in 1958, the "double prize" not only signalled Spain's artistic "triumph" in an international sphere but also projected a deceptive image of modernity and openness to audiences abroad. In 1960, when MoMA invited several Spanish artists to exhibit their work in the *New Spanish Painting and Sculpture*, they did so to reciprocate the "generous hospitality of institutions in Spain and the warm response of the Spanish public to American art" in Barcelona and Madrid in 1955 and 1958 respectively. In 1963, the exhibition *Arte de América y España*, which was organized by Franco's regime in Madrid, brought together over 600 artists from Spain, South America and North America. In this context, US American art—including the latest tendencies of Neo-Dada—were co-opted to project Spain's modern ambitions and a vision of Hispanidad that integrated the entire Americas. The work of some Spanish artists also moved internationally in the private sphere. One of the best-known cases is that of Antoni Tàpies, who began to exhibit at the Martha Jackson gallery in New York from 1960.¹³

When organizing the abovementioned conference on Spanish-US relations, which is the source of this publication, our choice of venue was the Fundación Juan March, who generously collaborated with us on the event. This was a deliberate choice because this institution played an active part in the history of cultural relations between Spain and the United States during the Cold War. The Juan March Foundation was founded in 1955, and one of its fundamental activities in its early years was to award grants to artists for study trips. This enabled Spanish artists, such as José María Yturralde, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, and Antoni Muntadas to spend time in the United States. In 1975 the foundation also opened an exhibition hall in Madrid, which showed some of the first exhibitions of American artists in

post-Franco's Spain. An emblematic case is the 1980 exhibition of Robert Motherwell, an artist committed to Spain. It served to reconcile the artist with the country, twenty years after his *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 54* had been rejected by Spanish officials involved in staging MoMA's 1958 exhibition in Madrid, *The New American Painting*, because of its anti-Franco title. Since 1980, the Juan March Foundation has also managed the Museum of Abstract Art founded by Fernando Zóbel (1924-1984) in Cuenca in 1966. Zóbel, a painter born in the Philippines and educated at Harvard University, assembled an important collection of contemporary Spanish art, with which he founded a museum that was directed, managed and designed by artists, independently from Spain's official initiatives at the time. Alfred H. Barr Jr. who visited it in 1966, called it "the most beautiful little museum in the world."¹⁴

In recent years, scholars have placed special emphasis on the political instrumentalization of modern art in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁵ This affects both the United States and Spain. Our conference aimed at widening current perspectives by highlighting the role of private organizations, such as the Fundación Juan March or Zóbel's Museo de Arte Abstracto de Cuenca, in establishing cultural links between Spain and the United States. The goal of the conference was to broaden scholarly discussions of European-US cultural relations, which have traditionally excluded Spain (alongside many other countries located in the margins of Europe). While some recent attempts at producing a global history of Cold War art have introduced key Spanish figures, such as Equipo Crónica, into the narrative,¹⁶ there is still a wealth of material to be considered. Similarly, a number of pioneering publications produced in Spain in recent years have considered Spanish artists in the context of the early Cold War but there has been little research into Spanish-American relations in the later Cold War period.

Based on the current state of research, the essays selected for this volume go beyond the early Cold War era to shift attention into the sixties and seventies, foregrounding the role of institutions and organizations in Spanish-American artistic relations. While some readers

might be surprised to see the inclusion of a Latin American dimension, we need to bear in mind that the cultural spheres of Spain, Latin America, and North America were connected at an official level in the Cold War context. From the Francoist perspective, it suffices to point to the exhibition *Arte de América y España*, held in 1963 in Madrid, which brought together Spanish, South and North American artists under the auspices of Franco's regime. From a US perspective, it is helpful to recall Richard L. Kagan's observation that the American fascination with Spain was part of a double interest in Latin American and the Peninsula, which underpinned the foundation of Hispanic studies in the US:

At the heart of this phenomenon is what James D. Fernández aptly calls Longfellow's Law. By this 'law' Fernández asserts that U.S. interest in Spain is primarily mediated by U.S. interest in Latin America. The law itself derives from the advice that the young poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, residing in Paris, received from his father in 1826: 'Such are the relations now existing between this country [the United States] and Spanish America that a knowledge of the Spanish is quite as important as French. If you neglect either of these languages, you may be sure of not obtaining the station which you have in view'.¹⁷

Adopting a cross-cultural perspective, the essays in this issue examine Spanish-American artistic relations the overlapping periods of the Cold War, Franco's dictatorship and the transition to democracy. Serge Guilbaut's essay "Atomic Art Around A Hot Bikini Cloud" begins with a chilling introduction to the advent of the Atomic Age, the breakdown of East-West relations, and the coining of the term "Iron Curtain" by Winston Churchill in 1946. Following the nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific, which displaced hundreds of people, the fascination with the bomb and the fears of its destructive potential were processed and often trivialized in popular US culture. Guilbaut explores some of the consequences of the

events of 1946 for exhibitions, critics, and artists in the US, all driven by the desire to create a modern American art, distinct from European and especially French models. Newman and Pollock both looked to Native American traditions and abstraction for solutions, addressing, as Newman put it, “the times of the greatest terror the world has known”.¹⁸ Guilbaut’s analysis of Pollock’s canvases of 1946, initiated a few weeks after the Bikini detonation, however, reveals the artist’s struggle in overcoming figurative painting. The assertive, ‘masculine’ approaches to painting by both Newman and Pollock in New York, Guilbaut argues, differ from the attitudes adopted by European artists in Paris—Wols and Bram Van Velde—who chose to disengage and called into question of what constituted representation and the significance of art in the face of the new Atomic Age. Guilbaut’s essay is helpful in providing context for the following essays, which focus on specific cases studies of artists, exhibitions, and institutions that channeled American-Spanish artistic connections. Julián Sánchez Díaz reveals the ideological positions underpinning the MoMA-organised exhibition *New American Painting* in Franco’s Spain, a fascist dictatorship that was also a US ally. John Curley considers how Spanish artists influenced by figuration and Pop art, such as Josep Renau, Eduardo Arroyo, and Equipo Crónica, navigated the contentious political terrain of Franco’s Spain and its relations to the US.

Switching the viewpoint back to the US, Javier Ortiz-Echagüe and José Díaz Cuyás centre attention on US artists who visited Spain. Ortiz-Echagüe focuses on the visit of the avantgarde filmmaker Jonas Mekas to Ávila in 1963, which resulted in his short film *The Song of Avila*. It relates to the Mekas’s wider interests in Spanish mysticism and connects with the output of the experimental New York filmmaker Marie Menken, who also dedicated a film to Spain during this period. These are exceptional cases in the context of cultural relations between Spain and the US during the Cold War given their apolitical, experimental, underground nature. Drawing on archival documentation, José Díaz Cuyás focuses on the international *Encuentros de Pamplona* festival in Spain in 1972, which counted with the

presence of Nicolas Cage and Willoughby Sharp. Díaz Cuyás analyzes Sharpe's contribution to the festival called *This is your Roof*, a selection of videos by sixteen New York artists from SoHo's dynamic underground scene.

A few years after the *Encuentros de Pamplona*, the Spanish artist José María Yturralde to study at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This issue includes a conversation between Yturralde and the art historian Paula Barreiro López, offering fresh insights into the role played by MIT in the development of Geometric Abstraction in Spain, as exemplified by Yturralde's trajectory, which is representative in its orientation towards the international avant-garde in the US, such as György Kepes, John Cage, and Nam June Paik. Yturralde's move to MIT was facilitated by a stipend from the Fundación Juan March in 1975. The essay by Inés Vallejo Ulecia in this volume highlights the importance of the foundation in presenting North American art to Spanish audiences in the post-Franco years. The shows were organized in partnership with high-profile US institutions, dealers, the artists' estates and/or the artists themselves. In addition to thematic shows, the foundation hosted solo exhibitions dedicated to de Kooning, Motherwell, Lichtenstein, Cornell, Rauschenberg, Rothko, Hopper, and Warhol.

The final two essays shift attention to Spain's role as a point of connection between Europe and the Americas. Rodrigo Gutierrez Viñuales gives an overview of the aesthetic and institutional fluctuations between the North and South American artworld between 1939-1960. Renata Ribeiro dos Santos delves into the archives to examine the correspondence of Luis González Robles, Franco's influential curator, who was involved in official displays of Spanish art, together with Arturo Profili, the general secretary of the first five editions of the São Paulo Biennial. Focusing on the biennials of São Paulo and Venice in the 1950s, and the Spanish art exhibitions in the United States in the early 1950s, Ribeiro dos Santos reveals the astonishing maneuvers underpinning the organization of such exhibitions as well as the

awards. Writing after Spain's success at the 29th Venice Biennale, where Eduardo Chillida won the Grand Prize for sculpture, the Spanish curator shared a secret with Profili:

Between you and me: If I do not have the Grand Prize for Painting for Tàpies too, it is because I chose not to vote for him. Lourival will explain. Tàpies is young. Politics my friend, politics. And North America was grateful for my sacrifice. I had success guaranteed with Chillida, so I allowed myself the luxury of this little juggling act.¹⁹

This 'juggling act' was a significant gesture: the Grand Prize went to the American artist Mark Tobey for the first time in the history of the Venice biennale, and there is no doubt that Gonzalez Robles' vote helped smoothen Spanish-American relations and prepared the path for the exhibitions of Spanish art that were shown in New York in the early 1960s.

As González Robles put it, "Politics, my friend, politics".²⁰

Notes

¹ Andy Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, edited by Pat Hackett (New York: Warner Books, 1991), entry September 29, 1983, 533.

² Fernando Vijande, interview with José M. Martí, *El País* (1986), in *Fernando Vijande: retrat 1971–1987* (Barcelona: Fundació Suñol, 2017), 98.

³ Pedro Almodóvar, *Patty Diphusa y otros textos* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1991), 14.

⁴ See Hans Laguna, *Hey! Julio Iglesias y la conquista de América* (Barcelona: Contra, 2022), 129-160.

⁵ Claudia Hopkins, Iain Boyd Whyte, *Hot Art, Cold War—Southern and Eastern European Writing on American Art 1945-1990* (New York: Routledge, 2020), and *Hot Art, Cold War—Western and Northern European Writing on American Art 1945-1990* (New York: Routledge, 2020). Reviewed by John J. Curley, "The Networked Art Object of the Cold War," *Critique d'art* 57 (Winter 2021), 23-35.

⁶ Sasha D. Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship. Europe's Peaceful Invasion of Franco's Spain* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

⁷ The international team that worked under Harrison was composed of Nikolai Bassov (Soviet Union), Gaston Brunfaut (Belgium), Ernest Cormier (Canada), Le Corbusier (France), Liang Seu-cheng (China), Sven Markelius (Sweden), Oscar Niemeyer (Brazil), Howard Robertson (United Kingdom), G. A. Soilleux, (Australia), and Julio Vilamajó (Uruguay).

⁸ For example, Luis Moya Blanco, Miguel Fisac Serna, Luis Gutiérrez Soto et al, "Edificio de la O.N.U. Visto por arquitectos españoles: sede permanente de la O.N.U. en Nueva York," *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura (RNA)* 109 (January 1951): 21-33. Lewis Mumford, "Magia

con espejos,” [United Nations Building] *RNA* 129 (Sept-Oct 1952): 68-69; “Edificio Bancario y de oficinas en la Quinta Avenida de Nueva York,” *RNA* 159 (March 1955). See also Eduardo Delgado Orusco, *El amigo americano* (Madrid: Abada, 2022).

⁹ Juan Barcino [pseud: Juan Cortés y Vidal], “La decena de arte abstracto de Santader,” *La Vanguardia*, August 18, 1953, 19; Miguel Cabañas Bravo, *La política del franquismo: el hito de la Bienal Hispano-Americana de Arte* (Madrid: CSIC, 1996), 93–94

¹⁰ René d’Harnoncourt, “Prólogo,” *III Bienal Hispanoamericana de arte. El arte moderno en los Estados Unidos. Selección de las colecciones del Museum of Modern Art, Nueva York*, exhibition catalogue Palacio de la Virreina and Museo de Arte Moderne, Parque de la Ciudadela (Barcelona, 1955), 9.

¹¹ Harnoncourt, “Prólogo,” 9.

¹² Neal Moses Rosendorf, “Hollywood in Madrid: American Film Producers and the Franco Regime 1950-1970,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 27: 1 (March 2007): 77.

¹³ See, for example, *New Forms. New Media II* (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1960).

¹⁴ Manuel Fontán del Junco, “Un museo de artistas, para un país de artistas sin museos,” in *El pequeño museo más bello del mundo. Cuenca, 1966: una casa para el arte abstracto* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2022), 6.

¹⁵ See, for example, David and Cecil Shapiro, “Abstract Painting: The Politics of Apolitical Painting,” *Prospects* 3, (1978), 175-214; Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: the Congress of Political Freedom, the CIA and the post-war American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002) and, regarding Spain, Jorge Luis Marzo and Patricia Mayayo, *Arte en España (1939-2015): ideas, prácticas, políticas* (Madrid: Cátedra 2015).

¹⁶ Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri (eds.), *The World Goes Pop* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 67; John J. Curley, *Global Art and the Cold War* (London: Laurence King, 2018), 135-136.

¹⁷ Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze. America’s Fascination with the Hispanic World, 1779-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2019), 170-172. See James D. Fernández, “‘Longfellow’s Law’: The Place of Latin America and Spain in U.S. Hispanism, circa 1915,” in Richard Kagan (ed.), *Spain in America: The Origins of Hispanism in the United States* (University of Illinois Press, 2002), 122-141.

¹⁸ See *Barnett Newman, Select Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O’Neill (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 100.

¹⁹ Letter from Luis González Robles to Arturo Profili, Madrid, 28 June 1958. Archivo Histórico Wanda Svevo/Bienal de São Paulo / BSP, 01-11394 05. Quoted in Renato Ribeiro dos Santos’ essay in this volume.

²⁰ Idem.