

Los Esquizos de Madrid.

Figuración madrileña de los 70



Guillermo Pérez Villalta, *Escena, personajes a la salida de un concierto de rock*, 1979

Los Esquizos de Madrid. Figuración madrileña de los 70 traces the artistic and personal development of a group of artists who, in the midst of an international scenario characterised by tendencies which broke with the past, started a return to figurative painting. Carlos Alcolea, Chema Cobo, Carlos Franco, Luis Gordillo, Sigfrido Martín Begué, Herminio Molero, Guillermo Pérez Villalta, Luis Pérez-Minguez, Rafael Pérez-Minguez, Manolo Quejido and Javier Utray are the protagonists of this selection of works which deal with the complex cultural and social environment in Madrid at the end of Franco's rule and the first years of the democracy.

This exhibition, coorganised by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Fundació Suñol, contributes to the definitive historiographical record of the group of artists who made up the so-called New Madrid Figuratism. The presentation of the exhibition in the Fundació Suñol allows its geographical reach to be widened to other publics and regions, who have the opportunity to get to know what that period meant in depth, both from a social and an artistic point of view.

Globally, the sixties represented a period of rebellion and a resurgence of alternatives to conventions in the political, social and cultural spheres. In Spain the end of the dictatorship could be sensed and it was a restless time, when an attempt to bring the country's ideology and cultural formats up to date was becoming evident. Nevertheless, this updating process was made difficult by the thought censorship imposed by political officialdom. Even so, the seventies were a decade when freelance artists, semi-organised groups and some institutions coincided in their aims to "normalise" the arts.

In the international arena, conceptual art and minimalism were making an impact everywhere as the dominant trends. However, the decade of the sixties was much more fertile: *Nouveau Réalisme*, *Arte Povera*, the Fluxus Group, the

Situationists and Joseph Beuys represented the concerns of many collectives, who questioned and shared ideas and trends.

The challenging character of *Los Esquizos* to flee the established lines, the particular way of understanding figuratism which each one of them had, their extravert nature and a taste for controversy based on the theoretical sources upon which they had started out, were key at the moment of the Spanish transition to democracy, anticipated by what was happening within the different social sectors and how these were manifested.

The name of *Esquizos* was a nickname created by fellow Catalan artists (the *Trama* group), who at the same moment were immersed in absolute abstraction. What both groups shared, however, was a strong political and social commitment. In Madrid a climate of freedom was being generated and this was manifested in painting, but also included music, film, fashion and all that made up what was called *Movida*.

"Los Esquizos weren't painting to defend painting from their enemies or their detractors, rather because of a crazy fondness for colour" wrote Ángel González. *"Doing, doing, always doing, building new architectures, planning infinite gardens, covering new areas with stories and characters which never existed, passing light through geometric bodies invented on the edge of reason"*, as Guillermo Pérez Villalta said to Fernando Huici, in a letter written on November 27th, 1975. It made clear the irrepressible way of expression of all the Esquizos artists, who assumed the imposture as a base for their work.

The support of collectors, galleries and critics was crucial for the group's development. One of the most noteworthy hosts of the New Madrid Figuratism was the gallery owner Fernando Vijande, who supported them unconditionally. His friendship with Josep Suñol and the fascination that the latter felt for the contemporary art world, brought about the collector's familiarisation with this group whose work, nowadays, makes up a significant part of the Josep Suñol Collection.

After forty years, it is important to evaluate what the New Madrid Figuratism movement and its key members signified, as well as shortening distances, often more metaphysical than geographical, between Madrid and Barcelona.

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Curated by: Fundació Suñol, María Escribano, Iván López Munuera y Juan Pablo Wert



Fundació Suñol

Passeig de Gràcia 98
08008 Barcelona
T 93 496 10 32
info@fundaciosunol.org
www.fundaciosunol.org

Opening hours:

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