



Fundació Suñol

LEVEL ZERO

ACT 24:

DOCUMENTS AND MEMORY

JOSEP SUÑOL COLLECTION ARCHIVE

This timeline begins with the start of the Josep Suñol Collection in the early 1970s. It spans four decades, centring on four key periods up to the present day, and lets us place the Josep Suñol Collection in context and explore its foundations.

The first period (1976-1982) is determined by the close relationship between Josep Suñol and his friend and gallery director Fernando Vijande at the time when the collector was moving to his new house, which provided him with excellent facilities for showing large-size works of art. The collection quickly expanded and soon required a new space, Galeria 2 in Les Corts neighbourhood in Barcelona. This has always been an emblematic place in the history of the Suñol Collection given the many roles it played: from storing works in ideal conditions to occasionally offering studio space to artists as a place for work and reflection. In its time, Galeria 2 became an obligatory stop-off point for groups of collectors visiting the city from all over the world, especially at a time when it was not easy to see contemporary art in Barcelona.

The second period (1983-1990) runs from the opening of Galeria 2 to the decision to restructure Josep Suñol's building on Passeig de Gràcia 98. Over the course of these years, the collection consolidated itself during a very dynamic time for culture in Spain. The collection grew remarkably, especially with the acquisition of works by young artists at the time.

The third period (1991-2007) was a very active phase for the collection, which evolved both physically and conceptually. Work got under way on renovating the building on Passeig de Gràcia to adapt it for exhibiting works of art. At first the idea was to use a single floor of the building, but finally it was decided to fit out a second floor, and the inside courtyard was added as an additional space. In total, the different spaces provided 1000 m² of exhibition space. Work took longer than expected in the search for architectural solutions that would strike the right balance between art and its container. In 2002 the Fundació Privada Josep I. Suñol Soler was set up and registered.

The final period started with the opening of the Fundació Suñol to the public in May 2007 and lasts to the present day; it encompasses over 33 exhibitions, as well as other parallel acts related to the contemporary scene.

We have linked all the activities carried out in connection with the collection, and which are referenced in this timeline, to major events in the story of the rest of the world, mainly Europe, and tied them to a key historical moment in Spain.

Over these forty years, the collector has built up the collection by striking up friendships with artists, as well as museum and gallery directors and other professionals linked to the world of art. It is with this spirit that the Josep Suñol Collection makes up both a private and collective memory.

This exhibition aims to offer the most comprehensive information possible about the collection and its environment and help visitors get a better understanding of the reality of culture in the private sphere but with a public ethos.

On collecting

What is it that makes an object want to be kept, collected, possessed?

What is it that makes us want it to form part of our environment, to have it close by, for it to accompany us as we observe it, look at it and - why not? - it looks at us?

Is art a practice that only works through optical sensations and which uses reciprocal gazes to unleash a whole series of feelings that are difficult to organise?

Does art possess a kind of information that needs to be saved?

Is art the necessary question to help balance certainties?

Time and time again we undertake our search for codes to reveal its meanings and follow signs through different mediums, perhaps as another way of trying to explain the work of art and give meaning to something that appears to lack it.

We won't settle with what comes simply from its presence; we want to know more about what its physical body contains.

Art gives off a strange, unknown air that has to be clarified through an internal debate on its meaning or purpose.

All these questions - and others - go through my head when I think about the mission of a collection or museum, be it public or private.

Theory and thinkers have given us plenty of books and documents that might have provided a lot of information but which struggle to translate the "visual key" into something easy to understand.

"Translating" the image might well be impossible - I don't know whether we'll be able - but what we can do is complement it through a dialogue with other works from the same time or previous moments, without forgetting the archive of documents produced in parallel made up of texts, history articles, essays, reviews, photos and catalogues.

This material should appear alongside the work and plays a key role, since art is not an "object" divorced from its context. It should help us discover the historical and social environment and thus understand when and how the work of art was created

On the Josep Suñol Collection archive

What happens when we think of an archive, a form of classification where we keep everything involved in the process of creation?

What took place right from the start of the formation of the Suñol Collection was that the collector's interest in the works led him to follow up - we could say exhaustively - everything surrounding the work when it was acquired.

This curiosity in discovering the environment of a studio and striking up a conversation with the author was and still is a vital aspect for collector Josep Suñol as he complements and understands the work's imaginary and real circle.

When we were designing the exhibition to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Fundació Suñol, we thought it would be a good idea to show a good part of the documents the collector has built up over the course of the last 40 years.

This documentary archive shows us the network linking the works, the creators and the collector through all kinds of close ties. And it also lets us observe what happened after the 1970s. The newly restored democracy in Spain, the uses people made of freedom and culture and the headlong rush towards different models of thought and creation all caused a great stir and left their mark on major discoveries, practically at the same time.

We were also keen to reveal the powerful, catalysing effect of the media and the healthy reaction to change by intellectuals and society in general at a time of great expectations as Spain joined the international circuit, after the political and cultural ostracism of the Franco period. This was certainly a prolific moment for new museums and collections that filled the sphere of visual arts in the country with continents and contents.

The 1970s and 1980s and their long trail have left their mark on history as a period of transition and transformation. This exhibition aims to make clear the shift in paradigm and behaviour that took place at that time in the groups and projects that make up the art world today.