

ON PAPER JOSEP SUÑOL COLLECTION

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The paper becomes what we see through the lines, and yet remains itself. [...] The paper lends itself between the lines to becoming tree, stone, grass, water, masonry, limestone mountain, cloud. Yet it can never for an instance be confused with the substance of any of these things, for evidently and emphatically it remains a sheet of paper with fine lines drawn upon it.

John Berger, *Berger on Drawing*

Josep Suñol's fascination with work on paper is strikingly captured by the fact that over thirty per cent of the pieces in his contemporary art collection are done on this medium. Perhaps this interest was sparked by the spontaneity afforded by paper. Or maybe because preliminary sketches for later works can hold the key to understanding what goes through an artist's mind as they create an image. Or because such a vast array of specific techniques can be used with paper, including drawing, printing, photography and collage, as well as many pictorial techniques. Whatever the reason—or probably a combination of them all—the collection contains works on paper by Spanish and international artists that show the central role this medium played in art work in the last century and, above all, reveal its ability to become a medium in its own right rather than merely a tool—albeit a vital one—for preparatory work. The 20th century not only saw a large number of isms burst onto the scene almost simultaneously; it also gave rise to many more ways of working with a wide range of materials on any kind of medium. Given this context, it isn't surprising that paper acquired a higher status, above and beyond being a useful medium for studies, as the definitive medium to work with and a material in its own right.

In this exhibition we have arranged the pieces to focus on the way they make use of paper. An artist's choice to work on paper is not a fanciful whim, but stems from the specific possibilities or limitations afforded by this particular medium. The exhibition shows a wide range of techniques made possible by the use of paper but also contains a selection of works that defy paper's limitations.

The title *On Paper* reflects the exhibition's twofold purpose: to show work done on paper and at the same time to explore paper as a medium and an aspect of a piece that has a tremendous bearing on the work itself.

On Paper gets under way with three works that use paper in three different ways or for three different purposes. First, Christo's piece shows us an example of a sketch, one of the main resources for which paper has been used in art work. This one is for a 1976 project to wrap the Christopher Columbus monument in Barcelona, although it never actually left the drawing board. Here, the sketch becomes an original work itself.

Picasso, in turn, uses collage, a practice he pioneered. This piece, which introduces us to one of the techniques we shall see in the exhibition, uses paper not only as a medium, but also as a technique in its own right. Finally, a lithograph by Braque, one of Picasso's contemporaries and a key figure in Cubism, is an example of a print, another technique where paper plays an intrinsic part.

DRAWING. Throughout the history of art, drawing and paper have been an inseparable pair. The first room on drawing brings together a series of works—in pencil, charcoal, marker pen or Indian ink—that all have a narrative thread and a somewhat disturbing edge, either because of the characters represented or the perspectives used.

Gordillo's *Espacios Tortilla 1* transports us to an abstract universe. As in other works by him, this piece pushes past the edges of the canvas and

spreads beyond its own boundaries. Like a Spanish omelette, the maze created by this artist from Seville proliferates wildly. Gordillo draws—and paints—spontaneously, and his use of pencils—which require no drying time—lets him work even more freely. Pérez Villalta and Cobo, for their part, present preparatory studies, as does Dalí in his drawing for the screenplay for the film *Les Mystères surréalistes de New York*, which was never made.

In the next room we enter the realm of abstraction. Two pencil drawings by Aguilar are on show alongside one by Hernández Pijuan that delves into the possibilities offered by *painting* with pencil. This piece recalls a common way of working in his oil paintings.

In the same room, *Taurus* (Cuixart) and *Poulpe* (Millares) are two works that use an abstract language yet, as their titles suggest, represent animal figures with strong mythological ties. It is worth paying attention to the techniques used—gouache, Indian ink and frottage—as artists start to move away from traditional drawing to explore other options offered by paper.

BEYOND DRAWING. In this room, we find works that openly tackle the technical limitations of paper. As we move away from drawing, we discover a new facet to paper as an excellent medium for other techniques besides charcoal, pencil and ink.

A large work by Tomás Gómez is at the head of the room. Gómez draws a face that looks more like a primitive mask than a portrait. His technique mixes marble dust and ink to make a paste that gives the work its body. This is probably one of the clearest cases of a technique that pushes the traditional limits of paper, but several mixed techniques are also used by Colomer, Tàpies or Amat.

TECHNIQUE: PAPER. In some pieces, such as those on display in this space, paper leaves its function as a medium behind and becomes a technique or an essential part of the work itself, as in collages and photocopies.

The first piece is a triptych by José Noguero. This montage of photocopies requires paper not simply as the most suitable medium, but the only possible one.

The series of 1960s collages by Albert Porta (later known as Zush and now Evru) uses cuttings of women's fashion magazines and photographs that take us back to his childhood, when his house was full of magazines belonging to his mother, a dressmaker. His dreamlike creations have a strong surrealist influence.

In Chillida's and Arroyo's collages, the medium of paper becomes a technique and a medium at the same time. Chillida's work presents a hanging sculptural collage, and Arroyo's is made out of police files containing detailed information on nameless people.



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