

**FROM FRANCO TO EXPO'92:**

**A HISTORY OF THE ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL TRANSITION IN SPAIN**

**by JORGE LUIS MARZO**

**"No more of apples painted by the hand of he who ignores his own tragedy". Manolo Millares, 1959**

One day in 1987, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, opened the envelope containing the name of the city that had won the competition to host the 1992 Summer Olympics. In a Catalan accent he shouted, "Barcelona." In front of him, the mayor Maragall and the minister Serra gave each other an enthusiastic embrace. The Ramblas of Barcelona were filled with jubilation, crowds gathered around a large screen, on all sides there were T.V. camera transmitting live. Something had been gained that for many was a dream, something inconceivable for a country in which it seemed that history had unleashed its wrath. The euphoria was uncontrollable.

However, let us freeze this image for a few seconds. Who in reality is that person, small, with a severe look, who while opening the envelope of the fortunate city, held the gaze of a nation, gathered in a few moments all the illusions of a country in the youth of democracy? No more and no less than one of the most important figures of Francoism. Minister, representative in Moscow of the, "Spiritual reserve of the West," as Franco liked to call the country, and one of the most active promoters of marginal "ghettos" for gypsies and emigrants in the suburbs of Barcelona. Practically no medium of communication has questioned his presence or his representativeness. Welcomed by politicians, journalists, athletes, businessmen, artists, Samaranch represents our pro-man abroad. In 1992, a few days before the inauguration of the

Olympics, a journalist asked the president of the Generalitat, or autonomous government of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, what kind of relations he could have had with someone who had participated so clearly in a regime that had been responsible for his own imprisonment. Pujol responded, "The past is the past. It's obvious that I don't share certain views with Mr. Samaranch, but we cannot forget that he has done a lot for Catalonia in the institutions that he represents," among them president of the main financial body in Spain and the third in Europe.

In a parallel fashion, in the spring of 1991, the German artist Hans Haake was censored in the Miró Foundation in Barcelona. Invited by the institute to create a work that would deal specifically with the relation between art, society and politics, Haake was preparing an exhibition on the use of Juan Miró's imagery by corporations and financial institutions. When the sad event came to pass, no medium of communication general or specialized uttered a word about it. The art critics were completely indifferent. Before something so flagrant, several people decided to put pressure on the media. On contacting one of the art critics of EL PAIS, the most influential newspaper in Spain, we received the following response: "You already know that I do not write about exhibitions that never took place " (1). Despite appearances, he was not joking.

With these two situations before us, we should ask ourselves: Up until what point are they disconnected? Can we say that in reality they respond to the same sociological reality? In my opinion, yes we can. Both represent the final ramifications of coordinated sociopolitical and cultural policies that have been evident in Spain in the recent democracy but which have their roots – more deeply than they have cared to tell us – in the long period of Francoist dictatorship. Both emblemize a process, widely shared and subtly directed, of historical, cultural and ideological anesthesia. Both show, from different

perspectives, the relations between the ruling powers and cultural agencies in a supposedly identical landscape.

It seems clear that Mr. Pujol's comment has to do with the 'institutional peace' that was established before the Olympic Games in that they wanted to avoid politicizing or instrumentalizing the event. But...what about the civil society?; the intellectuals, the artists, culture in general? Did they also feel obliged to 'ease' their conscience before the altar of smoothly running institutions? Is it this concept of 'operativity' that in reality cleansed Mr. Samaranch of his guilt and which leads to oblivion on wondering what the best way is to be truly liberal, efficient, productive?

The response of the critic from EL PAIS; how can it be understood in a country where only fifteen years before all cultural activity had to pass through the dark, dirty hand of the censors, when forty years have been needed to return to free speech? Is this response not another example of the anesthetic conception that has taken over a better part of intellectual life before the reality of attaining a society that is truly liberal and efficient in capitalist terms?

Both examples can be explained by a slow, but at least not superficial, process of removing ideology from Spanish culture and politics. After the death of Franco, the euphoria and enthusiasm in the country was accompanied significantly by a strong political scepticism and a profound conception of what social relations should be. As we will see further on, the strong economic development of the sixties and the kind of transition engendered in the first years of democracy will be fundamental for understanding a cultural and political dispersal that will call for a creative practise that is highly individualistic, neo-conservative and formalist and for a renewed disdain for activities and theories that have to do with criticism, deconstructions and debates over functions. "Spain is in fashion," because in Spain one can work without any kind of pressure, one could hear in the early eighties. It was

certainly like this; in general terms, there were no pressures from above in the artistic context, but there were none from below either. Neither artists nor intellectuals intended to create a viable platform for articulating serious, critical and far-reaching debate. There were no pressures, except a communion of interests, which is not the same thing. A communion born of the self-regard of a state that thought itself to represent the whole society, when in fact it only represented a part of it. Through a policy of rewarding 'genuine creation, individualistic, not pressured by power or involved in interests outside of art,' a kind of artistic practise has been developing that has rejected social criticism as something that has a negative affect on creativity and which has made itself into the maximum of 'art for art's sake,' after the supposedly bitter experiences that political art during the Franco years had reflected.

We have to move the country forward! Enough of criticism and complaints! Let's do something! enthusiastic phrases that must be said, exorcising demons, frustrations, repressions. But not in drunkenness, awaited for a long time, the senses have been weakened, the ideological 'concessions' are no longer exceptions but norms and with the party finished, already with a hangover, we see who in reality was buying the drinks; we have perceived that during the party, many things have happened that perhaps we do not like, but that they are stamped with our approval.

This should be the point of debate that the talk proposes; How can a conception of culture be arrived at in which only what 'really takes place' makes sense, what is official, that which does not threaten the healthy functioning of the machinery? But how does one understand that no one has remembered the pernicious behaviour of Samaranch during Francoism?

Culture has been understood as an instrument of the state, of the government, at the same time that this has come to be the only thing apart that is truly capable of making the machine function. However, it is not about the

state having imposed those determined roles, but that the kinds of discourse that have appeared after the death of the dictator have also legitimized this behaviour. In a democracy, it is not as easy to guide a society along a strict course as it is in a dictatorship. There appear a series of mechanisms that control, although minimally, the directions that governments and institutions want to channel society along. But, what happens when those same mechanisms have been absorbed by the various elements that are part of the web of decisions of power, when that segment of society that has generally been characterized as that which criticizes power forms part of those very power? In 1992, the majority of cultural curators and managers are working for public bodies or large private corporations. Journalists are aware of being subject to the very things they are reporting on. It is not that it had been censored, better said there was self-censorship. Who was able to openly express criticism of the methods which with the Olympia of culture and Art was being prepared in Barcelona if they themselves organized the event? Up until what point is the machinery of the state able to criticize the state?

This sophisticated process of displacement cannot and should not be read from easy or simplistic parameters. In it are joined very diverse factors and of very different tendencies; historical, cultural, political, economic, psychological...The instrumentalization of culture by the state or an 'officialist or utilitarian' conception of it has appeared because in reality there already existed, in a society that was already openly liberal, the abandoned ground on which it could take shape and gain legitimacy. No one has said, "This has had to be like this"; but, "Let's support a determined manner of doing things because it suits us, given moreover that no one can accuse us of having created it." My intention is to situate and define in appropriate terms what this process and debate has been that has appeared in Spain, at least in the artistic field, so

that it will stop being absorbed in such a way by the central powers, at the cost of the ability to remember, the capacity to criticize and the possibility of creating a true forum of discussion regarding the role that art and culture can have as instruments of knowledge and criticism in a young democratic society like that of Spain.

Certainly, on proposing an analysis of this kind, I am aware of the parallel importance of an investigation of names activities and contexts that have occurred in Spain in the manner of an "unofficial story." I point, for example, to a good number of things (artistic productions, research of the media) that have been done far from the centers of information and artistic distribution, or those being done in those very centers but which for political or economic reasons have not become known; there is also an intense deconstruction of the isolation that women have suffered in the artistic field; I should also point to the history of censorship during and after Franco, etc., etc. My intention is not to create in absolute a positivist discourse on the cultural process (this would not respond to the real fragmentation of the unity of cultural productions), but to examine the logic of the discourse of power (and its image as it appears in painting) and at least freeze its clock for a second to appreciate its true identity and will.

But, what was the transition? How was it made? Analyzing these points we will understand more easily the character of art and culture that emerged in the eighties and we will see from a better perspective up to what point art in the young Spanish democracy has been only an inverted reflection of all that was formalized under the dictatorship: an art that was individualistic, formalistic, and unconsciously integrated into power. We will see the principal characteristic that the phenomenon called culture has developed in Spain, this is to say, culture as understood as an instrument of the state; granted, a different state, free, in support of rights, but which has been incapable of

understanding the immense possibilities that history and collective will has put in its hands. A collective will has been simply robbed by a common good. But without impositions. Here is the true paradox, to which we can give the name functional amnesia.

The debate over culture during the transition in Spain has been marked by an officialist character; it has been constructed in such a manner that counter-arguments on the part of the civil society have been rendered impossible and it has fomented the idea that only through official channels is it possible to create a culture, which at first is not negative, but which in reality demonstrates that the public channels have not assumed the importance of internal criticism either, or that which we could call the "social double." Certainly, I consider as very important the role of the state in the creation of cultural contexts, always when the results come to be the construction of a network of loudspeakers at the disposition of the community, and never, as has been the case in Spain, when those loudspeakers are used for publicity and are placed on the façades of government ministries.

On the twentieth of November 1975, Franco died. A moment of exaltation, of anxiety and of great expectations for the future. In reality, there existed a widely spread conscience that could not easily be won over by a few radical criteria of change. The history of Spain has not exactly been a rose garden under these criteria. Many people had the idea that Francoism had been born as the result of the confrontation between radicalisms. Franco himself knew it, in 1969 he named Prince Juan Carlos, who later would become King, successor in the role of Chief of State. To back the Monarchy implied giving an image of power to a figure who was superhistorical and who could be identified with any party. On the other hand, it seemed clear that the regime was disintegrating because it had become putrified, not because an

alternative had usurped its power. It was disintegrating only because of that. It was the state that was becoming aware of its own state of decay, it was the state itself that had taken the initiative.

José María Maravall has pointed out that there were two movements in the process of transition (2). The first was a movement of reform, negotiation and agreement in the higher levels of the state; a movement that was closed in on itself and in which basically only the elements of the state that had helped Franco participated. The second was a pressure movement instigated by political organizations whose principal representatives were the Workers' Commission (communist union), the PCE ("Partido Comunista;" Communist Party) and the PSOE ("Partido Socialista Obrero Español;" The Socialist Worker Party of Spain).

We should keep these various factors in mind. What we consider to be the state structure of the Francoist regime was in fact a heterogeneous conglomerate of large private corporations that had practically kidnapped the economy of the country. This is essential in understanding that the concept of a democratic state would not be welcomed by the private sector during the early eighties, as they acted with strict control of public culture, – public in the liberal sense of western countries, that is to say, with the money of the contributor –. Let us consider that the Bank of Spain (which had played such an important role in the military insurrection of 1936) was not nationalized until 1962. In 1970, 7 of 112 banks in the country handled 70% of funds and directly controlled one quarter of the 200 larger national businesses. In examining that first dynamic of finance described above, we cannot overlook the fact that no movement could be effective without the approval of the state, that is, those that controlled the state.

Regarding the pressure from the second movement, basically carried out by the unions, we should look at some data: in 1966, 1.5 million working hours

were lost to strikes, 14.5 million in 1975 and 150 million in 1977. These were positions savagely contested by management with 25 000 suspensions of work, salary and security, only between January and February of 1974. Why was the presence of these unions so important – that is to say, collective direct action – in the political struggle to the point where political parties used them as protective shields? We will observe the results of a survey taken within the working class in 1977:

- Preference for a model of strategy that would mean an accumulation of reforms that would transform capitalist society.
- Only a minority defends a fully elaborated model of socialism.
- Job security, health plans and salaries are three times as important as questions of politics.
- Strong egalitarianism (before a simple system of merit) and skepticism with regard to change.

The majority of the workers, anxious about a political transformation of the state, mainly supported movements of solidarity and labor justice. We should remember that democracy in Spain was born parallel to the crisis of 1973. That primordial interest in establishing secure labor conditions before firm policies is shown in a study conducted in 1975 in which 61% of those interviewed were in favor of a gradual process of political transformation that would guarantee a degree of stability for labour, in contrast to 22% that demanded quick and radical change. We should also note that among those who preferred slow change, 43% showed a preference for the Communist Party.

This data begins to show us some interesting characteristics. The Spaniard feels, in his or her legal status, capable of bringing about changes in labour more quickly than changes in politics, since they must be developing a certain skepticism towards the idea of real civic participation in the process of transition. It is widely understood – and more people have resigned themselves

to this – that the state is more operative in the time of developing programmes of transformation. We also see that in the elections of 1977, democracy became the exclusive territory of the political class. When the UCD, a party that won the first elections, formed a coalition of 14 small parties (or groups of notable figures) it served as a kind of adhesive for what had been the state, making possible a patrimonial conception of public mechanisms, something that the Socialist Party will inherit.

The apathy and individualism generated by this becomes slightly more noticeable towards 1978. In that year, the frequency of reception or exchange of political information was the double in England, France, Austria, Holland or the U.S. of what they were declaring in Spain. In those countries there was three-and-a-half times more confidence in, "political efficacy," that is to say, in helping to change local law. Utopia begins to take on the colour of apathy.

In order to be finished with this series of facts, to my mind very revealing of the character that the country will adopt before the possibility of assuming a critical stance in the eighties, let us look for a moment at a study conducted in 1976, because it will show with a degree of clarity (assuming that the studies can be dangerously objective) the political and social conditions in Spain at that time:

- 1 – Evolution towards a Western democracy: 75%
- 2 – Universal vote: 70%
- 3 – The state, planner of the economy: 87%
- 4 – Separation of church and state: 66%
- 5 – The phrase, "Social inequality is not natural and can be reduced with a proper policy" is accepted by: 83%
- 6 – The state should prioritize public schools: 69%
- 7 – Complete social assistance in health, care for the elderly, free education and housing: 96%

8 – Participation of unions in politics: 56%

9 – The unions having control of their own industries: 48%

10 – Businessmen should not have great influence in national affairs: 66%

Essentially, the Spaniards believed that democracy was not so much a question of psychological or social change as a question of the efficiency of the mechanisms of the state. Enrique Gil Calvo has described the problem in a very pertinent way:

"The extremely low associative density, cosubstantial to the non-existent participation of the urban middle class in voluntary organizations, is the key to the congenital weakness of Spain's civic society, that is to say, its compulsive habit of resigning its own responsibility to the state, handing over to it all authority, be it good or bad."

Gil Calvo continues, pointing to the mark left by the regime during the sixties in granting a series of incentives so that the total consolidation of a free market economy would not escape the true control of the state:

"The 'selective incentives' were not granted by Francoism to stimulate the urban middle classes to participate in the public interest. On the contrary, they were granted to stimulate non-participation. The gratification of the people was sought after not in order to grant them responsibility in the public realm but on the contrary, so that they would avoid all such responsibility. They bought them out so that they would consent to Francoism and let it be, washing their hands (...) Therefore it comes as no surprise that, on the death of the dictator, the urban middle class remained indifferent, willing to let themselves be taken by the

highest bidder (preferably more esthetically presentable than Francoism), as long as they would be guaranteed their comfortable irresponsibility. "(3)

In this manner, and with the passage of time, the state will fortify itself in a real social and cultural legitimization that in reality will impede a certain social conscience that would be involved in the construction of society. To be fair, this legitimization will not be lacking in 'funcional and ideological' debate. What will happen is that debate will only take place within the limits of those very administrative mechanisms. Individuals will feel the ever-growing impossibility of uniting and articulating discourses outside of the circles of power, being more and more complicit in the situation in looking for a "professional adaptation" where it was comfortable, where in reality it was "more operative." It is not only that the state has created the only official culture, but that no one responds to it. Neither critics nor artists will escape to this, allowing the traditional moralist history of Spanish culture to revise itself under the auspices of the new democracy. The majority of those who considered themselves intellectuals during the sixties and seventies are now perfectly situated in the administrative machinery. What, in reality, has happened so that those who fought against Francoism have ended up seeing the state as the only defender of the freedom of expression? What are the younger generations to assume when diverse high representatives of the Ministry of Culture, among them the Director the Prado Museum, are obliged to suppress their disgust at the active role played by Spain in the Gulf War, that ministry being directed by one of the most charismatic political intellectuals of the Spanish transition, for years associated with the Communist Party? I quote José Ramón Lausen, from 1979:

"The Spanish intellectuals have been informative and instrumentalist. They have avoided social criticism and investigation for practical reasons, they have concentrated on their technical function." (4)

However, one may have to look for certain characteristics in more distant sources, in the very tradition of thought of the pre-war period, which in turn has its roots in the enlightened pessimism of the 19th century. The main thinkers such as Ortega y Gasset, Costa or Gavinet should be situated within the line denominated as 'regenerationist', which calls for an intellectual elite that is remote from the masses but which wants big changes for them; for a regeneration of the country through the central powers, through the liberal consensus within the administration. The Spanish intellectual has always been reticent to the idea of collective movements that could articulate an ample and critical debate with regards to public culture. And this is probably because for centuries the country has felt the need to "hurl itself forward," to "leave the historical mire" in which Spain submerged itself who knows when. Until some believed that they had found the talisman; the same magic cure that some one from time to time decides to invent.

On the 28th of October, 1982, the Socialist Party wins the elections by an absolute majority, with 46% of the votes. The election slogan: "The hour of change." It was truly a moment of historical enthusiasm. People who had been persued and jailed by Franco found themselves in the government of the country. A day of enlightenment. A future that held promise.

Three years later, in September of 1985, the incomparable gate of the Palacio de Velázquez in Madrid opens for an individual exhibition of the painter Miquel Barceló; it is the first time that the palace has been reserved for the use

of only one artist. In the text of the catalogue, the director of exhibitions at the Ministry of Culture, Carmen Giménez, writes:

"For us, the fact of having reserved the Palacio de Velázquez in the Retiro of Madrid for only one artist is an exceptional occasion. We have wanted to participate in the international consagración of this Spanish artist, thus breaking with a long and sad tradition in which our artists could not enjoy in their lifetime in their own country the prestige and recognition that they had received beyond our borders."(5)

Miquel Barceló is now 28 years old. The Ministry organizes for him an immense exhibition so that he can enjoy his success "in his lifetime." The flagrant contradiction jumps into view. How can this be? Are there not dozens of other more mature artists deserving of that kind of recognition? What, then, are the real interests of the government in presenting Barceló as an already renowned artist at the age of 28? What does Barceló represent and what does his painting represent that would prompt a decision of such magnitude?

The phenomenon of Barceló is not an isolated case by any means, although it must be one of the most extreme. It responds, as we will see shortly, to a clear conjunction of proceeding factors in the art world, in politics and in the general context of the society. As we have already indicated at the beginning of the talk, in a democracy, it is much more difficult to direct things along determined channels when these channels are not supported by pre-existent social and cultural realities. In order for them to work, they need the support and legitimization of many sectors, or of preeminent sectors bound to the central powers, to the powers that carry them through and eventually implant them in the society. The development of cultural policies in liberal societies is not generated by force of the law but through the organized

conjunction of different bodies that are continuously legitimizing themselves thanks to the dedication and coordination that exists between them. This image of institutional consensus is what we call "official culture."

My intention is to demonstrate how and to what point the critics, artists, politicians and dealers arrived at such a point of operative conjunction (and, without a doubt, ideological), how the final result, owing to the social position of the powers there represented, turned into a promotion of a single stylistic and functional conception of the practise of art and of the social definition of the artist. A conjunction which clearly served the new interests of the state and which greatly facilitated the need for an aesthetic elaborated by reactionary private sectors of the society.

We are looking at an artistic practise rendered useless by its social decorum, stripped of ideology, depoliticized and utilized by various artists without pretensions of social or cultural criticism, individualist (and emblemized in the adjectives "young" and "rebellious"), voluntarily committed to the directives of the aesthetically acritical market. This is an artistic practise emblematic of the traditional reading of the national artist: dramatic, explosive, vital, individualist, whose impulsive "rebelliousness" is mathematically categorized as a political act, without the necessity to go further; an art that is exportable owing to the similar aesthetic and commercial processes that exist abroad; an art of responses and not questions, not subject to pressure imposed by the system but to personal desire, therefore an art that can be manipulated by the official culture itself.

Spain needed a new image to give to the world and a new image for itself. And there was no time to waste. There were more than 40 years of dictatorship, and so the price to be paid did not matter. The central powers look at their surroundings (perhaps they looked in the mirror) and saw that they did not have to create a single thing; they had it at their side, held during the

turbulent 1970's but conscious that its moment would come, counting moreover on the experience of having worked on salary for a better part of the creation of the vanguard in the 50's, and with the certainty of being the creators of a new reality, when what they were creating was a new kind of mirage. The mirage of an old kind of painting by an alienated artist.

The world of official art in democratic Spain is in fact reactive and sets in motion all the problems that were confronted during the 50's and 60's. In the same way that abstract-informalist painters believed in seeing in an alienated, formalist and globalist art the possibility of not being blessed by Franco, the young painters of the 80's assumed that an individual practise given over to the relation between the expression 'rebel' and market was the best way to avoid the possibility of getting involved in renewed political discourses. And in the same way that Franco finally made use of such an informalist belief, the art produced in the 80's has been at the service of the post-Franco democratic state. Both Franco and the current government have understood that the best way to export and legitimize an image is to situate it in the context of the world economy so that, through a substantial decoloration, it can be introduced into the current of global information, in which ideology has no function. Francoism and the cultural policy of the new democratic state have another important point of similarity. It seems that neither have been forced to create a new determined style of representation or has joined with the artistic community to create new artistic practises, although in the case of Franco it is evident that censorship had closed off the road for many creative possibilities. This is to say that the state found within the contemporary intellectual society the perfect formulae for establishing an officialist and propogandistic art, causing serious paradoxes under the dictatorship, which were resolved in the democracy through the idea of the liberation of the artist from all discursive or collective ties and the massive introduction of all critical potential, persued by Francoism,

into the machinery of the state. In this way, the state assured a complete liberty of decision and action regarding cultural policies because they held at the bosom of the very system the legitimization that it needed.

Through the collective conceptual experiences in the mid-70's and the subsequent general movement towards performances and individual careers, pictorial discourse seems to be reborn from its supposed ashes. After the move towards painting by a better part of the conceptual artists, there appears a reinforcement of certain abstract painters like Broto or Sicilia. But above all, there appears a genre painting which is figurative, narrative, biographical and metaphorical to the point of being close to the genre of landscape painting; Pérez Villalta, Albacete, Campano, Quejido, Navarro Baldeweg, Barceló, Alcolea, García Silva, Amat, etc., etc. Driven by a certain desire, which in reality may have responded to an interest in regaining the possibility of showing explicit discourses on any subject, these and other painters develop a concept of painting based on the "culinary" element of painting itself good use of materials, good technique and the creation of style.

In 1976, the critic Javier Rubio was already pointing to the importance that committed patrons would have in the rebirth of painting:

"This discourse must establish the bases of an innovative practise and permit its constant criticism, its change in direction, which would prevent the immediate recuperation of its products as an alternative form of mercantile exchange. Painting, in as far as being a producer of objects, exists in the market place and runs the risk of its objects losing their effectiveness in the field of specific knowledge."

But he adds, significantly,

"Let us also say that formalist criticism, which perhaps in finding its place reached the limits of its effectiveness, can be of use here, above all when it is criticized. I am referring to the essay by Greenberg."(6)

It is no coincidence that Greenberg appears in this commentary. In reality, Greenberg, as we will see, represents to perfection the ambitions of the new generation of artists: expressive individualism, autoreferentiality, but moreover, and this is new, not traumatized by adverse political pressure. Greenbergian formalist theories have been used as a protective shield by artists and by the Franco regime alike, which would cause profound confusion and paradoxes in abstract informalist art. In the 50's Tapies, Saura, Millares, etc. considered that the best way to avoid being pursued by the regime was to create a system of representation that would be autoreferential, liberal-nationalistic, in the sense of incorporating certain national traditions that would be articulated as universalist discourses and therefore close to the market. The international market was in reality understood as an appropriate place for avoiding the totalitarian pressures of Franco, who in fact needed a liberal art to export to the world and thereby argue in favor of the supportiveness of the system. All the informalist and abstract-expressionist painters in Spain in the 50's and 60's, contemporary with the pictorial experiences of the American formalists, will conceive of the material on the canvas as political content in itself and render impossible the explicit representation of political denunciation. This interiorization of the political function of painting, exempt from any extra artistic relationship, will bring about the image of artists as being alienated, withdrawn, individualistic and tending towards the notion that only in isolation can one work freely.

But what happened, and this is the paradox, is that Franco was also calling for a practise of this kind. A kind of painting that would be abstract,

that would interiorize political discourse, that would be capable of finding its way into the international circuits, thereby denying any social cotextualization, that would, through its highly individualistic practise, eliminate the possibility of any social intercourse and that moreover would become a political weapon against communist collectivizations. It would be perfect for a regime desiring to use free expression and creation as a tool for propaganda. On the other hand, the image of the artist as hyper-dramatic and explosive in his alienation fits perfectly with the image of Spanish history that the regime wanted to cultivate; a nest of baroque, impulsive, rebellious and above all genial artists, fruit of a "blessed individuality," as Luis Gonzáles Robles, principle commissioner for the arts under Franco, used to say. So that the Spanish avant-garde painters in the 50's and 60's are going to find themselves marching in lock step, believing themselves to be creating a liberating art when in fact it was an art that the regime wanted them to create.

This, on the other hand, poses many questions. If Greenberg conceived of an art that would be "free" but only applicable in liberal societies, how does one explain the existence and triumph of a free art in a totalitarian society? Is it possible that Greenberg had inadvertantly conceived of a system that was perfectly adaptable to fascist structures, when these structures were transferred to free market societies, and therefore to global transformations? In reality, given the results of the formalist practise in Spain, perhaps we should not read Greenberg in the context of a liberal system, but in the context of systems that sought to avoid political participation, in which can be included democracy as well as totalitarianism. As an illustration, we should look briefly at the speech given by Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, Minister of Culture, later a prominent figure in Spanish democracy, at the opening of the First Hispanicamerican Biennial in 1951. It is practically Greenberg that is speaking:

"Only by supporting authentic artists, by removing them from so many strange insinuations that may divert them from their true path, can a true artistic policy be conceived. In our immediate situation, it seems to us that this support for authenticity should move in directions: on the one hand, it should stimulate a historical sense, that is, the situating of the artist in actual time, avoiding all misleading formalist traditionalism; on the other hand, it should strengthen a national sense, avoiding all false universalism, all provincial admiration for what is done outside of the country, which certainly does not mean averting artists from the universal currents in art, but instead to make them aware of their own values (...) This opening up of the spirit, which is proposed as a fundamental artistic policy, is an essential weapon in the fight against materialism (...) the great heresy of our time. Our job becomes all the more urgent in a time when the communist states are trying to put art in their service, creating a gross caricature and mystification of true art. If this art succeeds in serving its true master, the spirit, it is by this alone that it will become an essential ally of all political Christian art (...) This is, in essence, the great preoccupation that should orient artistic policy... that art exist for its servants, not as a trivial or routine occupation, but as a 'grave adventure,' a dramatic factor in their existence, connected to what is the best and the most noble, in the individual as well as in the collective realm. "(7)

We will also see what the Francoist critic Eduard Ducay wrote in 1951 in an article entitled, "Anti-painterly and Anti-Spanish Art," with respect to the potential political function of the abstract-informalist work of Spanish painters in the 50's:

"Is it that art can, for example, put the national personality in danger? Threaten the integrity of that collective human condition? It is difficult for

me to believe that opposing aesthetic cannons can destroy the character and vision of a country (...) A mode of painting cannot threaten anyone (...) the qualifier of 'anti-Spanish' cannot be applied simply because a painter believes in his way (...) The term is even more inadequate if it is applied to artist who, in all their works, have shown themselves to be true Spaniards – great rebels, great inventors, great creators." (8)

We can imagine the astonishment of the anti-Franco artists on hearing these kinds of assumptions of political content on the part of the regime. A confusion that must have caused constant misunderstandings, pain and frustration. However, after the death of Franco, many painters and critics will tend to see the situation in Spain during the democracy as legitimate grounds for creating an art that would be truly formalist, individualistic, defuncionalized and free of extra-artistic connotations.

Towards the end of 1979, the prophets of the new art make themselves known. The first names are the critics Juan Manuel Bonet, Angel González, Aurora García and Francisco Rivas, Bonet being the principle spokesman. In the catalogue for the exhibition "1980," held at the Juana Mordó Gallery in Madrid, Bonet outlines what will be their programme:

This exhibition will be a test of the new and exceptional reality of our painting (...) and this is an aspect which we would like to emphasize, now that political art is not in fashion, it is important to re-examine the politics of art; now that politics does not appear on the outside, it is urgent to re-express the politic element that is on the inside.

They try to define this in the following terms:

"The crises are surmountable only through stimulating the market, provoking it if necessary."

Finally, in a clear reference to conceptual art:

"The country now counts on excellent painters (...) gone are the theoreticians and and the sterile sectarianism. "

Tomás Llorens, critic, historian linked to Social Pop Realism in Valencia, will answer that the only purpose of the exhibition is to celebrate the peak of Bonet's own stardom. Through a polemic generated by the exhibition, Bonet writes his response in a Madrid right-wing journal:

"To my understanding, and I believe to that of most of the critics of my generation, the 60's will remain in the history of art as a kind of burden, pure politics in imagery, pure porno in terms of eros, pure dullness in terms of technology. Everything except painting. Under tinsel, bright colours and ironies, it was like a time of fasting and of constipation for art. Before Bozal, Rubert, Lorens and Eco, and before Pop and Op, and before such a need for messages, we almost forget the truth of painting, the necessity, the passion and the pleasure of it. They committed an injustice in knowing so little of the past, in sacrificing so much to ideology and so little to painting (...) Neither the parties of the left nor their more or less organic intellectuals could offer an alternative that could seduce us. However, the marxist 'science' and 'method' seemed unquestionable. But as Paramio would say, marxism knows little of art and literature, and there came the moment in which it served only to justify a group of five Catalan conceptual artists who went by the name of "Grup de Treball" and who wanted to convince us (within the limits of good intentions) that art ended in Terrassa (a city near Barcelona were they used to meet) and at the copy shop."

At a certain point, he begins to define his personal horizon:

"The term 'painting' is winning the match. Through all these metamorphoses, through all these setbacks, it has been creating a new space, not determined by tendencies, but by individualities. This new space, and a criticism that begins to have clear perspectives of work, allows us to move forward with a certain optimism (...) My own policy as a writer goes from Bonnard to Jasper Johns, from Morandi to Diebenkorn, from Cezanne to Motherwell, from Matisse to Nichols to Stael, from Giacometti to Rothko, from Monet to Joan Mitchell."

We will notice that he does not mention a single national artist. He ends by saying:

"We will be smart enough not to go back to entangling painters in a complicated discourse." (10)

Bonet clearly expresses his postulations and intentions; the rejection of any social conception of art, the support of individualism at any cost and clear manipulation of the market. However, why do we cite the opinion of a critic like Bonet and not the opinion of another, contrary to his principles? Simply because he, along with the rest of the gang of critics from Madrid and Barcelona, will be, after 1982, the principle collaborators and curators of exhibitions mounted by the Ministry of Culture and the principle cultural foundation in Spain, the Foundation "la Caixa."

On the other hand, Bonet will be in charge in February of 1980 of putting together a catalogue of the pro-Francoist critic and artist, Juan Antonio Aguirre, in which he would also praise Eugenio d'Ors, a relevant intellectual figure of the earlier regime (11). In 1991, in the magazine LAPIZ, he will write the following:

"Regarding the decade of the 60's, the venue that is now part of the Community of Madrid used to present work which reflected great confusion. Far from showing what was new at that time, it applied itself to 'democratic' principles, which in art are never advisable."(12)

In October of 1980, an exhibition is held at the Municipal Museum of Madrid called "Madrid D.F.", curated by Bonet and in which collaborated a good number of the new critics; Fernando Carbonell, Jiménez Losantos, Angel González and José Luis Brea, this last one being named a few years later as the secretary of exhibitions at the Ministry of Culture, although their positions will later evolve critically with respect to the movement. All the painters related to this circle will have left their mark. In the catalogue, Angel González writes a text which is one of the most revealing of the critical parameters in those years:

"It is astounding the frequency and the frankness with which a Greenberg or a Michael Fried are allowed to relegate art to the shadows during in its strongest moments, hand in hand with the artists of their generation (...) The domineering prosperity of American art, questioned by only 2 or 3 fools is, consequently, an indication of the 'historical self-consciousness of modernity,' ruthlessly appropriating the painting of Messon from Breton and Hoffman from the Bauhaus without the ideological rubbish that was burying it."(13)

The marks of the discourse, if we can describe it this way, are clearly defined. It is necessary, according to González, to have a complete and exhaustive removal of ideology from artistic practice, in the interests of 'historical self-consciousness': a concept of creation should avoid any kind of "ideological rubbish" that could bury it. American formalism is the perfect means for carrying this through.

In a parallel fashion, the practises of many of the older painters 'suffer' from this same process that Gonzales supports, collectively creating work which is essentialist in nature. Rafael Canogar, who as we have already seen had associated himself with a political practise in the last years of Francoism, was already being interpreted by the critic J. Castro Beraza in the following way in 1976:

"And so they feel the sting of those draped fabrics, that seem to be a classical and ferocious purge. And there are the forms – some new forms in their work – and there is the colour, supplanted for years by the cold range of greys, used for their "social representativeness." (14)

Alexandre Cirici, a renowned critic, especially among the conceptual artists of the 70's, writes in 1981 about García Sevilla, an artist who also came out of the conceptual circle in Catalonia:

"Removed from the self, always without apparent plan, García Sevilla tends to disturb this disassociation to give importance to calligraphy made sign." (15)

Or Francisco Calvo Serraller, writing in 1980 on Ráfols–Casamada:

"For years, Ráfols–Casmada has excercised this rigorous asceticism which has the effect of understated sensuality, of controlled passion that seems to allow for pure pleasure, for the instant of maximum joyful tension."  
(16)

Calvo Serraller, who, let us say in passing, is given to mental masturbation, will be the true spokesman for this whole reactionary network. From his position as principle art critic at EL PAIS, the most influential newspaper in the country, Calvo will develop a programme of propaganda and historical legitimization.

But the procession continues, through a whole series of perfectly articulated exhibitions: "Salon of the 16," in 1981, organized by Miguel Logrono; "Other Figurations," in the Foundation "la Caixa" in Madrid between 1981 and 1982, in which the German curator Rudi Fuchs chooses Miquel Barceló for the Documenta in Kassel; "26 Painters. 13 Critics," in 1982, also in the Foundation "la Caixa," or "Spanish Kaleidoscope," in May of 1984 in Germany.

But not all voices, or not all the voices with a loudspeaker, were part of this theoretical and practical scenario. Some began to point to the dangers in this kind of discourse. For example, Vicente Aguilera Cerni in 1979:

"We are paying the bill that history has passed to us after so many years of silence and of breathing the foul air of despotism, even though freedom opens new horizons that must be explored, there has opened up a panorama of confusions, opportunism and cravings that the official culture would impose as an incongruent and aberrant subproduct of the now difunct tyrrany. "(17)

Spain, at the beginning of the 80's, begins to be seen in international circles as a perfect place for the insertion of a certain kind of mercantile and short term investment policy. With the appearance of neo-expressionism in Italy, Germany and the United States, Spain appears, thanks to the new mark of neo-figurative painting, as a perfect testing ground ... given moreover its complete lack of structures and its irrepressible urge to incorporate itself into the system of international artistic circulation. Margit Rowell, from the Guggenheim, wrote in 1980:

"In a sense, the contemporary Spanish artist is in an enviable position. He is not psychologically competitive nor is he economically concerned.

Given that the information from the outside is a minor element in the equation that defines his art, his art does not run the risk of becoming derivative of the international avant-garde. Because there is no market at home, the artist is able to create his own criterion and form his own audience and critics. Moreover, the historical joining of theoretical, political and economic liberty (in spite of rampant inflation) is favourable. Therefore, while isolation may have been a handicap historically, it may paradoxically represent an advantage for this generation. "(18)

In reality, Rowell, between the lines, is presenting the Spanish scene as a tasty morsel for the invasion of international interests. With the joining that she describes, the big institutions and galleries would find it difficult not to become involved in a market like that of Spain, with huge business potential, given the desires of the state. Jose Luis Brea was writing in 1989:

"Will it not be that the disarticulation of our scene will mean the creation of a testing ground for the functioning of systems? Is it that in our pathetic incapacity to contain something that could be called a tradition of modernity they discover an exceptional testing ground for imagining what would be made of a post-history?" (19)

Carmen Giménez and María Corral (of the Foundation "La Caixa") will clearly be the intermediaries in this process. If they brought great amounts of information to the national scene, they also sought the legitimization not only of the the new state of things in Spain but the kind of art that the institutions were supporting. The exhibitions of the new international painting will continue uninterrupted. In March of 1982, Barbara Rose presents in Barcelona, "American Painting: The Eighties"; in 1983, the Foundation "La Caixa" presents "La Transvanguardia"; the Dau al Set gallery in Barcelona, "Young Austrian Savages" in the Ministry, in the Palace of Velázquez, "Tendencies in New York"; and in 1984, The Foundation

"La Caixa" presents in Barcelona the show, "Origin and Vision. New German Painting," with texts by Carmen Giménez, already working at the Ministry of Culture.

However, this void that Rowell refers to will be immediately taken over by the institutions towards 1982. An alliance of banks, businesses, galleries, institutions and the state will, in February of that year, guide the first meeting for an international art fair; the ARCO. At the presentation it was said – while the Minister of Culture, Pío Cabanillas, recalcitrant Francoist, commented on how easy it was for his son to imitate contemporary art (20) – :

"If it is certain that the avant-garde movements of this century have shown the success of Spanish artists, then it is also certain that Spain has not been a good environment for the development of these movements.

The time has come to put an end to this situation." (21)

Or perhaps it is that these movements, previously rendered impossible by the political climate, can now be developed only through the market. The participants in ARCO'82 were important figures: Bonito Oliva, Rudi Fuchs, Cirici Pellicer, Bonet Correa, Lucio Amelio and Barbara Rose. Fuchs and Amelio were directly related with Barceló and Rose presented an exhibition of Barceló a few days later in Barcelona. Antonio Saura, an artist who at that time was being equally praised and denounced, wrote of ARCO'85:

"In its present state, ARCO serves only, with the random and prestigious help of a few galleries, to conceal everything in mediocrity and the false desire to show that our country possesses a true artistic dynamic and an efficient cultural reality. This illusion forces our little story to end abruptly. A whole generation is going to suffer from this conditioning and these misunderstandings." (22)

In October of 1982, the PSOE comes to power. From this moment, the new art scene will have complete public support. One of the most noted premises during the election campaign was the importance of increasing public support for culture. From 1983 to 1986, the total investment in culture is 68.23% (23). However, this had to be channelled and centralized. In 1983, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of External Affairs create a new special agency for the patronage and support of Spanish cultural activities abroad. Its name: PEACE ("Programa Estatal de Acción Cultural en el Extranjero": State Programme for Cultural Action Abroad). Included as an associate of the National Centre For Expositions, Carmen Giménez will be the principle figure. From this moment on, all cultural activity abroad patronized by the central state – we should remember that Spain was immersed in the issue of regional autonomy – must pass through this agency. All exhibitions and publications are created by it. Mathematically, the critics Bonet, Gonzáles, Calvo Serraller and others, will receive most of the curating jobs and similarly, the agency will have a very important role in the promotion and support of the ARCO fair.

The American critic Jamey Gambell has pointed out in the magazine *Art in America*:

"The argument that lies behind PEACE is obvious enough; the promotion of the cultural image of Spain is good for the domestic economy on all levels, good for national self-esteem and not damaging to the image of socialism in the eyes of the voters." (24)

In the area of the functional conception of art, no doubts are offered. The National Center For Expositions and PEACE champion notions already present in the officialist art scene. In the catalogue for the exhibition "Contemporary Spanish Art," touring France in 1984 and organized by PEACE (and with the presence of Barceló, Broto, Campano, Civera, Delgado, García Sevilla, Grau,

Llimos, Navarro, Pérez Villalta, Quejido, Sicilia, Solano and Zush), Carmen Giménez writes:

"Today, when political art is fortunately out of fashion, it is urgent to rethink a politics of art," (25)

in exactly the same terms that Bonet expressed himself 4 years earlier. In 1987, he writes for the exhibition "Espagne 87. Dynamiques et Interrogations," held in Paris:

"Plastic creation in Spain is, in fact, marked by the double desire on the part of the artists to be in tune with international movements, although assuming the specificity of their cultural heritage. This generation differs from those of before in that they have not been tempted by exile." (26)

To be in tune with international movements means removing all political content from art, a perfect way to avoid the temptation of exile.

Since the creation of PEACE, support for new young painters has been almost total. The need on the part of the government to create a new image has also meant the complete neglect of a large number of artists from earlier decades. The image of the young is everything. Gambrell notes:

"The international applause received by the Center (National of Expositions) and other public and private institutions has been enormous, but so has the controversy that it has generated. The argument has focused on the preeminence of the 'the young ones,' certain young artists from the 80's whose careers have been meteoric in the last few years at the expense, many believe, of a solid generation of artists who matured during the 60's and 70's and who have been left behind by the 'boom.'" (27)

The artist Juan Munoz has also commented:

"Everyone was quiet, waiting for the deserving promotion that antiquity would bring, when all of a sudden there appeared Miquel Barceló, the kid with the motorbike, and he gave them all a swipe that left them reeling, without them knowing what happened." (28)

And he will also point out the importance of antecedents with regards to the problem of rejection:

"I will never understand what kind of law of Mendel they are referring to when they say that a generation has to build itself on the efforts of the previous generation." (29)

But, who are these young people? Saura will say of them:

"To a large extent it is the artists themselves that are guilty, not only for their self-satisfaction and bourgeoisness, but also for their blindness to the immediate past. A large part of contemporary Spanish art is fundamentally mimetic and its identification is difficult." (30)

The painter Chema Cobo has written:

"Everyone is afraid of confronting his own memory (...) We started to paint in the early 70's, when minimalism and conceptualism dominated the scene, because it was the most radical thing we could do. To paint bulls in this country was a political statement." (31)

The process of deideologization of artists is not simple, but basically one can resume the following: they do not want to be responsible for the creation of cultural contexts nor do they want to represent any role that may open the way

for critical mechanisms. Miquel Barcelo has commented clearly in the American magazine Newsweek:

"To be in Spain means to play a role, like a little cultural hot shot." (32)  
 And evidently, he does not want to play it, although he may be all for deconstructing it. However, Barceló and Mariscal, later omnipresent official designer for the Olympic Games of 92', wrote for NEON DE SURO, connected to the "Taller Lunatic", a Majorcan collective from the 70's:

"We believe that only by questioning the deceptive behavior of Politics and Culture (which have a regressive and fossilized vision of reality) can we begin to clarify and progress in this transformation of 'the whole fight' (...) On the other hand, we do not know of any political party dominated by the left that has been preoccupied with culture, for reasons other than propaganda or prestige without seeing the rightest abyss in which it was sinking." (33)

The language of these artists sometimes has the sound of old bells emerging from a dark past. Here we have a phrase by Guillermo Pérez Villalta in 1983:

"But how far I was from those frivolous games [he refers to the conceptual]. More and more I seemed to confront the work with the sacred respect of a priest before the altar." (34)

Others wrote with open cinicism, like García Sevilla, one of the painters more integrated into the market:

"Before, the bad thing was clearly Franco and his regime. Today, the equivalent would have to be the mercantile ideology that invades everything, including art." (35)

At the same time, the theme of universality as a way of rejecting all pretensions of social criticism reappears in force, reminding one of ideas of the Generation of 50': "Mine are universal problemas, universal themes," said Sicilia, for example. (36)

But it will be in 1984 and 85' when the propagandistic operation will adopt a more sophisticated appearance, mixing in intellectual references. In May of 1984, the exhibition "Spanish Kaleidoscope. Young Art in the 80's" is held in Dortmund, Germany, and later in Basel and Bonn, organized by the General Foundation of the Mediterranean. All the young painters are present. The curators are Eduardo Arroyo, Francisco Calvo Serraller and Julián Gallego, a renowned historian of baroque Spanish art. Gallego writes:

"Each one of these artists seems interested in following the most direct path to his own objective which is, as in the most remote tradition, to be able to express himself to his fellow man. This without philosophical, political or aesthetic servitude: to paint for the sake of painting, which is no small accomplishment." (37)

What it amounts to in reality is an attempt to associate, through a respected figure like Gallego, the new painting with the glorious painting of the baroque period. The appeal to the baroque had already been used sufficiently by artists like Barceló, Campano or Amat. The presence of Gallego reaffirms the Spanishness of these artists, he confers to them an air of glory in relating them to the explosive, genial, and dramatic expression of the painting of the Golden Age.

However, these subtle legitimizing operations will sometimes adopt a flagrant political collusion on the part of intellectuals and critics, in most cases without government pressure but simply arising from the deideologization of criticism and its indifference to things having to do with state politics. A revealing document is found in the text for the exhibition "Barcelona. November 1984", organized in November of that year by the curator Salvador Riera and the then dealer Antoni Estrany. The show is composed of works by Amat, Barceló, García Sevilla, Ucles, Victor Mira and Robert Llimos. The text is signed by the critic and curator of the show, Victoria Combalia. One only has to remember that at that time, the socialist government in Madrid was preparing for the campaign for the referendum on the integration of Spain into NATO, calling for a "yes," before strong opposition, Felipe Gonzáles having declared his opposition to the inclusion in the military organization a few years earlier. Combalia writes:

"This business of contemporary art is like the business of NATO: if we want to be modern and western we have to enter, even though we may not like the first steps too much. The capitalist art market, as it appears now in developed countries, is ferociously competitive in its fight to impose young names, fashions, careers and destinies (...) Spain, so isolated in this regard up until one or two years ago, begins to see that it must not miss the train: from official organizations to private initiative we are going to see the relaunching of our young creators into the world, and if they force themselves to work at the rythm of the Common Market, success will be assured, the international art world wants new blood."

(38)

The apathy that underlies the text is obvious. There is only one road to creating artistic structures and no other. The conformism is desolating, but it

perfectly represents the spirit of many intellectuals, who hand themselves over body and soul to success, to official patrons and to the dictamens of official cultural programmes. Combalia seems to be saying the same thing that the Vice President Alfonso Guerra had said in referring to NATO: NATO or chaos; or its parallel in art: an art of the market or catastrophe.

The gathering of these kinds of legitimizing activities will have its first grand culmination in the large show on Spanish art and culture organized by the government and held in Brussels in 1985, with the purpose of firmly joining Spain to the European Economic Community, in that same year. We are referring to EUROPALIA'85. ESPANA. Organized by PEACE and curated by Luis Gonzáles Seara, the show is like a journey through Spanish history, culture and art. In a parallel fashion, the Ministry of Culture and Santillana Foundation edit two enormous volumes entitled, "Spain. Half a century of avant-garde art. 1939 - 1985", written by Francisco Calvo Serraller. It is nothing less than the true bible of the new democratic culture. It would be hard to find an analysis more openly manipulative and tendentious, above all with respect to the period between 1979 and 1985. Calvo declares himself the spokesman, father and mother of the new national criticism. His review of art produced after the dictatorship clearly avoids political issues, championing on every page the free innovative art that he, as he repeats to ad nauseam, nurtured along in the pages of EL PAIS. While praising Bonet, Logrono, Gonzáles, Combalia, etc., he leaves aside all gay or feminist issues, and likewise all cultural activities organized by autonomous regional bodies. The book is openly centralist and it comes to be the first ideological-aesthetic dictionary since the PSOE came to power.

Another point of culmination, also at the hands of Francisco Calvo, in collaboration with Juan Manuel Bonet and Miguel Fernández Cid, is the exhibition entitled, "Antipodas", organized by PEACE agency and presented at

the World Exhibition in Brisbane, Australia, in 1988. The exhibition comes to have an extremely formalist orientation, mystifying the Spanish artistic process and falsifying the Spanish cultural reality, in only presenting the norms of the official culture. A year earlier, Calvo had written in a catalogue for the exhibition "Espagne 87. Dynamiques et Interrogations":

"Twelve years after the death of Franco and with the socialists in power for their second term, one can affirm that the panorama of Spain is finally liberated of all its traditional clichés." (39)

The words he uses are 'specific strength,' 'affirmed personality,' 'total creative availability,' 'living legend,' 'reinvented modernity,' 'agitated figures.' Not a single allusion to the creation of social contexts for the work, the formation of structures or the necessity to consider educational or labour related programmes, or the urgency to remodel the system of distribution of state subsidies for artists and artistic centers. Only the withdrawn male artist counts. And from time to time, the woman artist.

The language of the contemporary critic will constantly raise questions regarding sexual identity and the representation of gender..Let us look at two examples. Calvo Serraller, in 1984, wrote the following on the artist Eva Lootz:

"A passive art, or rather, the art of passivity; a letting one's self be fertilized by reality, a perceptual availability taken to the extreme (...) a negativity, an opacity that is altogether feminine." (40)

Or the editorial of the first issue of the magazine LAPIZ, founded in December of 1982, two months after the socialist triumph, and an initial medium of expression for a good number of the critics connected with the Ministry. Its director, who is a woman, wrote:

"But LAPIZ is not to occupy itself solely with what can be created by artists, the true protagonists through their art of our passion, but the work of other men who are opening out to their environment is equally deserving of recognition." (41)

Although it is obvious that in the last few years there has been an increased awareness in the art world of the role of women in the process of creation, selection and distribution, it is no less certain that the reading of Spanish Modernity has made obvious the reality and the circumstances that have surrounded women's art. Not only does one see the clear machismo in the initial theoretical discourses, or at any rate, the traditional masculine conception of creativity (baroque explosion, free energy, agitated strength), but moreover, there has been no attempt made on the part of the critics, historians and curators connected to official culture to deconstruct the history of our modernity. So that it is not only significant that a curator like Gloria Moure wrote that "Vision is the only function" in art (42), in terms of aesthetic passivity, but that it demonstrates to what point women themselves have been closing off the road to true deconstruction. The presence of women in the bodies of administration and selection – both official and private – has fortunately been very large in the 80's, however, in general they will tend to see the Spanish woman artist in heroic terms rather than in terms of normalization. And even more grave is the complete lack of interest in changing things when the opportunity clearly arises. Let us look over some exhibitions as an example:

– the exhibition "Informalism in Catalonia," organized in 1990 by the Generalitat of Catalonia and curated by a woman, presented 25 artists, only one of which was a woman.

- "The avant-garde of Catalan culture," in 1990, curated equally by men and women and again organized by the Generalitat; of the 41 artists, only 1 woman.
- "The Biennial of Barcelona," meant to present young artists and directed by a woman, presented in 1989, 137 artists, of which only 38 were women.
- The international collection of the The Foundation "la Caixa," represented, in 1990, 41 artists, with work by only 2 women.
- The ARCO festival of 1990 represented works by 938 artists, among which there were only 111 women, 12% of the total. (43)

Clearly, it is not that there were women artists from the 50's and 60's that had to be saved, as some have pointed to as a justification. The main problem is that the historical exhibitions, apart from not making real investigations, do not ask what the real reasons are for the marginalization of women from the avant-garde process. It is often assumed that in all historical and geographical contexts the same thing happens, when, in reality, things happen in a concrete manner and in response to precise circumstances, as has been demonstrated, for example, by recent feminist studies of American abstract expressionism. On the other hand, I am not about to enter into a discussion of the eternal national excuse – the 'idiosyncratic machismo' of Spanish culture, which serves only to leave things as they are, categorizing women as heroines and not as artists.

In this context it would be very illuminating, for example, to analyze how women were separated from public life when democracy arrived. Let us remember that during the dictatorship, and specifically during the 60's and 70's, the role of women in the formation and activation of clandestine political movements was very important, they clearly participated in the direction of groups and the circulation of information. But once freedom arrived, public

politics passed once more to the hands of men, to the point where women have only a 15% representation in the government. However, this is not the most serious problem. The true problem is the apathy on the part of many women in Spain towards such problems, in spite of the concentrated activities of social and feminist groups. In 1992, the president of the Generalitat of Catalonia, Jordi Pujol, said in his opening parliamentary speech that part of the reason for the extremely low birth rate in Catalonia is that women work too much and thus are not able to dedicate themselves to motherhood. Practically no one responded to this scandalous conception of women by some one in a public office.

Before the socialist triumph of 1982, one of the first promises made was the creation of a determined network of artistic centers that would be able to coordinate the modernization of the structure of Spanish culture. However, a new reality imposed itself on this idea. The government found itself immersed in a process of administrative and political decentralization, what we call the State of Regional Autonomies, which would impede the government's pursuit of its real interests. The central administration then had to share cultural policy with the regional governments which perhaps did not identify themselves closely with the government in Madrid. However, it is surprising to see the programmatic conjunction of the majority of these diverse scenes. In this way, many of the new autonomies will see, through the creation of cultural structures, the construction of a center –museum for contemporary art.

They see these centers as serving the same purpose: the immediate introduction of an international network of circulation and distribution of contemporary art. In a parallel fashion, in the majority of the cases, they respond to concrete urbanbanistic policies, in view of the conversion of

inoperative but historically important neighborhoods into tourist attractions, not to mention the potential for the real estate market in these areas.

During the 80's, several centers are created: the Queen Sophia Center for National Contemporary Art (CARS) in Madrid, the Valencia Institute of Modern Art (IVAM) in Valencia, the Atlantic Center of Modern Art (CAAM) in Las Palmas in Gran Canary and – now being created – the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACB). In a parallel fashion, other diverse but smaller public centers will appear in many Spanish cities, augmenting the few private or public initiatives that, with interests beyond justifying benefits or channelling publicity, existed before in Spain, such as Metronom, Quinzena d'art de Montesquiou, Arteleku, etc. The greater part of the budgets of departments of culture related with the plastic arts will go to these large centers and to the formation of their collections...Although policies may vary from one center to the next with respect to quality and interest, it is shocking to see to what extent they have neglected to create a system that would create work space for artists, that would facilitate channels for technical experimentation, grants and the formation of critical activities such as magazines, video distribution and technical support. On the other hand, the lack of a system of independent subsidies, such as the American NEA, the Canada Council, and other systems in Europe, has generated an arbitrariness in the accessing of public cultural funds, without a clear policy with respect to these funds. In this way, the presence of politics in the distribution of financial support is much less controlled than in many other countries, producing constant clashes and interventions in its functioning.

As we have seen, these large centers are conceived as a kind of game of mirrors that are turned towards the big foreign centers. While the IVAM in Valencia, doubtless one of the most interesting of all, has managed to create a solid platform with respect to its collection and its role within the community of

Valencia, or the CAAM looks for regeneration in the isolated context of the the Canary Islands, apart from claiming a certain kind of tri-continental identity, the central nerve that the Queen Sophia was supposed to represent or the evolution of the MACB in Barcelona, represent some of the biggest fiascos and cultural frauds that could be imagined, and all done with taxpayers' money. The case of the CARS is beyond imagination. Inaugurated in 1986, during the general elections, without museum-oriented plans and practically without direction, the museum has drained the public treasury by almost six times what had initially been projected. In December of 1990, Tomás Llorens, who finally took control of the project, is fired for "a disparity of criteria on the conception of the museum." Without entering into the supposed bad relations between Llorens and the Minister Semprun, everything points to the true reason for his suspension – the long time period that had been imposed on the CARS project, to be finished towards 1996. The minister did not intend for the project to be finished for 1992. Instead, he wanted several years to elapse so that the center could accumulate a collection. After his downfall, they appoint María Corral, ex-director of exhibitions for the Foundation "la Caixa", symbol of an artistic practise that served the interests of the state in the 80's. In 1992, the collection is presented through a truly comical operation: the moving of Picasso's GUERNICA to the halls of the CARS, in a gesture of reclamation, falsifying the initial line of the museum and the desires of the artist himself.

Leaving aside the question of the efficiency of the creation of stable collections and the doubtless extravagance, for example, in the buying in 89' of a Picasso and Miró for 702 million pesetas (approximately 7 million dollars, U.S.), we find ourselves before the eternal problem of having to choose between rigor and fakery. The ministry has chosen a line of immediacy, of spectacle which is of instant political benefit. Regarding this kind of attitude, we will remember what Egon Bittner was already pointing out in 1965:

"Not only do the aims conceived on short notice change with time and compete with others in a very ambiguous way, but the results arrived at on short notice have, as is widely known, little value because they can be easily manipulated to demonstrate whatever one wants." (44)

The first national museum of contemporary art is ordered, not by creating structures and spaces in which to form and inform professionals and the public in general, but by incorporating itself 'ipsofacto' into the international network of artistic spectacles, in the 'gardens of marvels' of the new museums, which like banners are carried by the new forum of creative and receptive plurality that a liberal society is supposed to encourage. And no one has to react. Plurality which is in contrast with the fact that 80% of investment in art by the Ministry will go to the Queen Sophia. (45)

For its part, the creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona will turn into an incredible juggling game of the interests of private corporations and the state, shutting off the community from access to all artistic discussions, the community which has fortunately, but not without grumbling, begun to mobilize itself. While the entities related with the high profile artists, like Tapies, – a true grandeloquent dinosaur who has become the official artist of Catalonia to the point where the cabinet of the autonomous government, when it meets, does so under a large mural by the painter – are going to pressure those responsible for the museum, the participating private businesses see the centre as simply a place for short term investment. And all this under the fixed gaze of the state, terrified that its political projects will fall into ruin.

In fact, the evolution of the MACB has turned into one of the best examples of the conception of the state in relation to cultural policy. A few months ago, a letter was leaked to the press by Oriol Bohigas, the person in charge of the Area of Culture of the municipal government of Barcelona on what

cultural policy of the government had to be in the next few years. In the letter, he said that the government would only patronize large cultural entities, spreading out what is left to smaller centers and to new initiatives. Between the lines, one can read a certain criticism of the young artistic community for not being more ambitious, while government goes out of its way to help them. A true trap, but what in reality was being manifested was the desire on the part of the state to dissociate itself from those who did not prove themselves to be politically functional. Part of this declaration was also directed, and not in a subtle manner, towards the private corporations, whom he accuses of exploiting cultural expression and undermining the intentions of the MACB. In a moment of great tension, the adviser for culture for the Catalan government, Joan Guitart, says:

"I believe that the civil society chooses the government so that it will govern, but not to give orders the government. You can collaborate with the governments, but not pass over them. You can criticize us, but not order us." (46)

Democracy means voting and staying calm. Once this right is done, one is obligated to go home. The cultural managers appear as morally neutral figures, literally 'political', in charge of a perfect administrative function, almost tautological, in which notions of discourse, criticism and social participation are not seen as part of operativity. The citizens are literally separated from the activities which are supported with their money. And many seem to want nothing else, absorbed as they are in painting apples in oils.

At the same time, because of that good functioning, there appears a new kind of censorship. Now it is not said: 'I forbid you to do this because I don't like it;' but the euphemism 'this is not viable in commercial terms', hiding the always traditional ideological questions that underly any prohibition of

expression. In this and other ways, the exhibition of Hans Haake at the Miró Foundation was censored, as well as the projects of Dennis Adams and Rogelio López Cuenca at Expo'92, a project by Muntadas for Spanish television, the installations by the collective Agustin Parelo School and Capsule of Time Cordoba in the activities organized by the pavilion of Andalusia at Expo'92, an installation by Lorenzo Valverde for the Generalitat of Catalonia, part of a commissioned work by Juan Vicente Aliaga for the Foundation "La Caixa," etc.

Moreover, Spain is one of the few countries without a single law in its constitution regarding censorship. However, something even worse exists, something called self-censorship and which has influenced the majority of critics, journalists and intellectuals, prompting them to renounce any kind of responsibility in the construction of a new system, preferring to complain about the present one. And always for the sake of good personal operativity which assures protection in all inclement conditions, something which does nothing more than legitimize the state.

From 1987 onward, only one image will populate the political landscape of the country. Its name, or rather its number: 1992. The year in which "all the illusions of escape from our fatal history will gather, exorcizing once and for all our self-image as losers." The meeting in 1992 of a series of international events, all centered in Spain, will serve as a catalyst for all the mechanisms that the socialist state had set in motion when they came to power. The Fifth Centenary of the Discovery of America, the Olympics in Barcelona, the World Exposition in Seville and Madrid as the Cultural Capital of Europe, will serve as one of the most formidable social and cultural weapons that a state can conceive of.

In reality, the year of 92' is more than a simple gift from God. It is an enormous operation conceived as a social mirror; a prosthesis constructed by

the state, meant to transform, curiously, the political skepticism and apathy of the people in a light that keeps them awake and that fixes their gaze on a determined spot on the horizon. The Socialist Party is clearly aware of the fact that the political disinterest of the population is the perfect base for the free functioning of the machinery of the state, it also represents an important danger in the time of electoral legitimization. Moreover, this apathy can cause serious problems in the time of putting large mechanisms in motion.

Therefore, the year of 92' is invented, as way of creating the illusion of an illusion, as a way of holding the gaze of a nation on an allusory artefact, fantasmagoric but with all the glitter of something real, superreal, virtual. In fact, this artefact is seen with a kind of atheletic mentality; as a kind of high jump bar. The bar of 92' is set very high; a true challenge for jumpers that are not well trained. While everyone rehearses, the perfect body is being created for future occasions, future championships. Those that do not jump do not exist, they do not appear on T.V. And those that jump go home content, carrying some photograph of all those that announced that they would never grow old.

Art and its function as generated by the official culture during the 80's is the very image frozen in that photograph. It has been a lost time if we wanted to create social structures that would be durable and flexible. Surely, the artists have had a good time. But only a few. Most of them have gone mad because public grants do not go to those whose art is considered 'bad'; or they have had to put up with the demands of dealers; or they have had to suffer the destruction of their pieces because they are not considered important. Or the critics, giving in to subtle institutional pressures if they wander from the proper path; if they look for some place to express their opinions, beyond the well-established venue of the catalogue.

Spain has robbed itself of the idea of modernity. As Chomsky would say, this happens when collective memory turns into an "institutional memory" dedicated to survival through its mechanisms, through its 'hardware,' not through its content and function. The new democratic state has believed that to modernize the country, one has to dangle a carrot in front of its snout, a carrot of gold that cannot be eaten. And while the donkey pursues it, it is dedicated to its job, not caring who is riding on its back. But one day the donkey will get tired. That day perhaps, at best, it will discover that it is hungry.

## Notes

1 – The response is by the art critic Luis Casado, in telephonic conversation with the author.

2 – Jose María Maravall; The Politics of the Transition, Taurus, Madrid, 1982. Most of the statistical data used here is from Maravall.

3 – Enrique Gil Calvo; "The subordination of the People", EL PAIS, Madrid, December 3, 1992.

4 – José Ramón Lasuen; Mediocratic Spain, Planeta, Barcelona, 1979.

5 – Carmen Giménez; 'presentation', Miquel Barceló, Palace of Velázquez, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, September 12 to October 13, 1985.

6 – Javier Rubio; "Inventory", TRAMA, MAGAZINE OF PAINTING, #0, Madrid, 1976.

7 – Joaquín Ruiz Giménez; lecture, "Art and Politics," First Biennial of Hispanoamerican Art, Madrid, 1951. Quoted in Francisco Calvo Serraller; Spain. Half a Century of Avant-garde Art. 1939 – 85, Santillana Foundation and the Ministry of Culture, Madrid, 2v., 1985.

8 – Eduardo Ducay; "Anti-painting and Anti-Spanish Art", INDEX OF ARTS AND LETTERS, Madrid, #54 – 55, September 15, 1952.

9 – Juan Manuel Bonet; 1980, Juana Mordó Gallery, Madrid, October of 1979.

10 – Juan Manuel Bonet; "After the Battle", PUEBLO, Madrid, November 17, 1979.

11 – Juan Manuel Bonet; Juan Antonio Aguirre, Buades Gallery, Madrid, February of 1980.

12 – Juan Manuel Bonet; "From Clan to Zaj", LAPIZ, Madrid, Special Madrid, 1991.

- 13 – Angel González; Madrid D.F., Municipal Museum of Madrid, October, 1980. Artists: J.A. Aguirre, Albacete, Alcolea, Campano, Navarro Baldeweg, Ortuno, Pérez Villalta, the brothers Quejido, Schlosser and Serrano.
- 14 – José Castro de Beraza; "Rafael Canogar", DON PABLO, #3 – 4, Madrid, June, 1976.
- 15 – Alexandre Cirici; Ferrán García Sevilla, Central Gallery and Gallery Maeght, Madrid and Barcelona, February and May, 1981.
- 16 – in F. Calvo; op. cit.
- 17 – Vicente Aguilera Cerni; Editorial, CIMAL, #1, Valencia, January, 1979.
- 18 – Margit Rowell; New Images From Spain, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1980.
- 19 – Jose Luis Brea; "The Wall of My Country", Before and After the Excitement. 1972 – 1992, Amsterdam, 1989.
- 20 – José Fernández Arenas, professor of Art History at the University of Barcelona, gathered this commentary together with the minister the day of the inauguration. I am grateful to Prof. Fernandez Arenas for this information.
- 21 – 'Presentation', festival catalogue ARCO'82, IFEMA, Madrid, 1982.
- 22 – Antonio Saura; "The Festival of Whims", EL PAIS, Madrid, February 27, 1985.
- 23 – Jamey Gambrell; "Gearing Up. A report from Spain", ART IN AMERICA, v. 76, #9, 1988.
- 24 – Ibid.
- 25 – Carmen Giménez; Contemporary Spanish Art, Toulous, Strasburg and Nice, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, 1984.
- 26 – Carmen Giménez; Espagne 87. Dynamique et interrogations, Ministry of Culture, Paris–Madrid, 1987.
- 27 – Gambrell; op cit.
- 28 – in SUR–EXPRES, #7, Madrid, 1988.

- 29 – Robin Cembalist; "Learning to Absorb the Shock of the New", ART NEWS, v. 88, #7, September, 1989.
- 30 – Saura; "The Festival of Whims", op. cit.
- 31 – Cembalist; op. cit.
- 32 – Cathleen McGuigan; "Spain's Back on Track", NEWSWEEK, v.115, #6, February 5, 1990.
- 33 – Cited en F. Calvo; op. cit.
- 34 – Guillermo Pérez Villalta. Works between 1979 – 1983, Sala Pablo Ruiz Picasso, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, 1983.
- 35 – Cembalist; op. cit.
- 36 – McGuigan; op. cit.
- 37 – Julián Gallego; Spanish Kaleidoscope. Young Art of the 80's, Dortmund, Basil, Bonn, General Foundation of the Mediterranean, Madrid, May–August, 1984.
- 38 – Victoria Combalia; Barcelona. November, 1984, Gallery Dau al Set, Barcelona, November, 1984.
- 39 – Francisco Calvo Serraller; Espagne 87. Dynamiques et Interrogations, op. cit.
- 40 – Francisco Calvo Serraller; "Eva Lootz", EL PAIS, Madrid, December 1, 1984.
- 41 – Editorial, LAPIZ, #1, Madrid, December, 1982.
- 42 – Gloria Moure; In Three Dimensions, Foundation "La Caixa", Madrid, February, 1984. Artists: Tom Carr, Leyro, Gallardo, Eva Lootz, Angeles Marco, Mitsuo Miura, Navarro, Schlosser and Susana Solano.
- 43 – Regarding this, quote; Jorge Luis Marzo; "The Feminist Revision of Art History", LAPIZ, #78, Madrid, 1991.
- 44 – Egon Bittner, quoted in Alistair MacIntyre; Through Virtue, Criticism, Barcelona, 1989.

45 – Regarding an analysis of the concept of the generation of culture, including the cases of the CARS and the MACB, see; Jorge Luis Marzo; "La 'via española' and Institutional Culture", AJOBLANCO, Barcelona, March, 1991.

46 – "Interview with Joan Guitart", EL PAIS, Barcelona, November 15, 1992.

47 – Alfonso Guerra, socialist leader and ex-vice president of the government, in a speech on national radio in 1992.