



Exhibition: POP ART IN THE COLLECTION OF THE IVAM

IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern

15th March – 27th May 2007

Organised by: IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern

Curators: William Jeffet & Consuelo Císcar

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With this exhibition dedicated to Pop Art, the IVAM continues the project of presenting shows that display the contents of its permanent collection, grouped according to different themes, of which the exhibition dedicated to photography and the one dedicated to installations and new media have already been held.

The works of Pop Art in the Collection of the IVAM, which are among the most outstanding in Europe, focus on the European contribution to Pop Art, complemented by some examples of American artists and including some precursors of this style and actual Pop artists. The collection comprises a

large number of the different artistic positions and they are grouped in a flexible manner under the umbrella of the term Pop.

The catalogue published for the exhibition contains over eighty works by Richard Hamilton, Equipo Crónica, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, Valerio Adami, Sigmar Polke, Eduardo Arroyo and others, and texts by William Jeffet, Consuelo Císcar, Santiago B. Olmo, Clare Carolin and Lluís Fernández, along with a selection of critiques about Pop Art.

The Collection of the IVAM provides a broad, comprehensive overview of Pop Art and the presence of its legacy in the most recent contemporary creations. It focuses on the artists who influenced the development of the avant-garde movements in Spain, including the important contribution made by Spanish artists to that trend. And we say trend because of the different international manifestations of Pop Art that took place simultaneously in several countries rather than something that stemmed from a single source. Manifestations that can be grouped in categories that go from the precursors of Pop Art like Richard Lidner or artists of the Independent Group like Robert Hamilton or the American precursors Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg or Claes Oldenburg to the artists of New Realism like Martial Raysse, and New Image with works by James Rosenquist, and Narrative Figuration with works by Gilles Aillaud, Hervé Télémaque, Valerio Adami and Eduardo Arroyo, Realismo Crítico represented by the work of Equipo Crónica, Equipo Realidad and Juan Genovés, among other trends, including the legacy that has tinged the cinematographic photography of Cindy Sherman or John Baldessari.

Be that as it may, Pop Art was never a programmatic movement directed by a coherent group that expressed their ideas in manifestoes, but rather a

nexus of different groups and critical stances that resorted to images from mass production as their point of departure and that presented important variations according to their geographic and cultural background.

Although in many aspects it is the heir of the historic avant-garde movements, Pop Art constitutes one of the first examples of postmodern art practice thanks, precisely, to its appropriation of images already in existence. Collage and photomontage, along with Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades and similar works or creations of Surrealism, are important artistic antecedents. In fact, a series of Pop artists were directly linked to the latter movement (Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Hervé Télémaque). But more than anything else, Pop was the result of the growth of the consumer society that took place in the nineteen fifties and sixties: the new reality that captured the attention of the younger generation.

The British Independent Group, active from 1952, devoted itself to studying and reinterpreting popular culture and the impact of the mass media on society. Some relevant British Pop artists originally involved in the Pop movement produced a kind of painting or sculpture that does not fully develop their own presuppositions of the fifties. Nevertheless, American Pop emerged spontaneously without a group or manifestoes or an agenda, as a series of individuals that came together by chance through the first exhibitions that dealt with the phenomenon. In its treatment of popular consumerist culture and its figures, characters and products, there is a systematic appropriation and a creation of icons by means of a visual operation that consists in shifting them from the banal context of everyday life to the territory of painting, exhibitions, museums, in other words, to culture.

Josep Renau, who uses collage and photomontage techniques to criticise the American society, appropriating ordinary everyday images of the media and popular culture, has been considered a forerunner or a pioneer of Pop aesthetics, above all because of the influence he had on the work of Equipo Crónica and Equipo Realidad, who used the same techniques in painting to establish a critical interpretation of the images and icons that configure the visual culture of Spain at that time, but also turn their critical glance towards the past and history. However, this resorting to history, the painting of the past or cult cinema, which we find in both Equipo Crónica, Equipo Realidad and Eduardo Arroyo, is not limited to the cultural sphere in Spain but involves permanent interrelationship between popular culture and high culture. This is something that did not follow the initial premises of Pop Art, but in the eighties even Warhol was using images from paintings by Munch, De Chirico or Leonardo's *Las Supper* in his works.

The strategies of Pop provided a (not only visual but also intellectual) framework that, thanks to the contradictions enclosed in this iconographic encyclopaedia, constituted a point of departure for political and social reflection about the present. This point of departure allowed Pop to survive in *neo* and *post* formulations. Pop Art, in its broadest sense, left the avant-gardes the legacy of a narrative that is still vital for the aspirations of emerging artistic movements today.