



Exhibition: **El Pop en la Colección Gráfica del MBA**

7th March – 20th May, 2007

Curated by: Adriana Suárez

Organised by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM)

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The exhibition *El Pop en la Colección Gráfica del MBA* (Pop in the Graphic Collection of MBA) can be visited until 20th May next at the Sala de la Muralla at the IVAM. The show, comprising 53 works from MBA's collection, includes graphic work by some of the major exponents of American Pop Art like Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Pietro Psaiar, Mel Ramos and Robert Indiana.

The exhibition, curated by Adriana Suárez, affords an overview of the different variants of Pop Art from its origins with artists like Rauschenberg to its posterior development in the eighties with creators like the late Keith Haring.

The exhibition, which comprises a selection of works from the Graphic Collection of the MBA Group, offers the possibility of following the development of the Pop Art avant-garde movement, which broke away from the established canons of the art world and was characterised by constant references to advertising, posters, the consumer society and the serial production of artistic characters. “The collection started as a token of the correspondence that exists between a company whose success was based on marketing and an art characterised by the use of marketing in the group’s propaganda,” according to the exhibition’s curator, Adriana Suárez.

The collection was catalogued by the conservator of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Alfonso Palacio. A catalogue has been published for the exhibition with the works in the collection and texts by art critic Rubén Suárez, contemporary art specialist and gallery owner Adriana Suárez and the director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar.

Pop Art

Pop Art was born in the United States and Great Britain around 1955, but flourished in the sixties. The name refers to the “popular” art used in advertising, design, posters and illustrated magazines. It is an avant-garde movement inspired by the consumer society, creating direct, realistic subjects within reach of the general public, just the opposite of Abstract Expressionism. Pop Art is the art of the concept, of plastic research, representing elements that were not at all traditional at the time: soup cans, dollars, Elvis Presley, car crashes, celebrities, glamour... The artistic characters are no longer single images but a series of them, just another consumer commodity.

Artists Included in the Exhibition:

Andy Warhol is considered the most representative of the Pop artists. In the early sixties he began to paint Pop pictures, including the famous Campbell's soup can. Shortly afterwards, he set up his own studio, later known as The Factory, which soon became the place to be in the city, and the parties held there were covered by all the American press.

In 1962 he began to paint a long series of portraits showing his fascination for film stars like Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor or Elvis Presley. He also made one of his most famous works, *The Electric Chair*, which represents the anguish of death. In 1967 The Factory Additions published *Marilyn*, the first series of ten paintings on the same theme, which was followed by the series *Soup I* and *Soup II* and *Flowers*. On 3rd June 1968, he was shot in the chest by the actress Valerie Solanas, who accused him of stealing a work she had written. During his long convalescence, he made a series of small portraits of Happy Rockefeller, the wife of the Governor of New York. In 1971 he designed the sleeve of the Rolling Stones' album *Sticky Fingers*, for which he received a nomination for a Grammy Award. Then he started to work on the series *Time Capsules*, 610 cardboard boxes full of objects from his daily life: letters, photographs, art, clothes, collector's items, etc. In the seventies he also worked as a model in fashion shows, in photographs and on television for brands like Sony, TDK and Vidal Sassoon. Most of his works are based on photographs, but Warhol understood better than any other artist of his generation how to reproduce, reflect and give shape to contemporary life. Andy Warhol died in 1987.

Keith Haring started to draw as a child, inspired by the cartoons he saw on television. He took his first art studies at the Ivy School of Art in Pittsburg, and continued at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

His silkscreens for T-shirts were followed by his felt-pen graffiti on advertisements in the subway in New York, followed by iconography in chalk addressing subjects like power, the anguish created by technology and moral concerns. Paper, canvas, glass, steel: any medium was suitable for holding his figures influenced by the art of the Eskimos, Africans, Mayans and Chinese...

His characteristic style, a sort of New Wave Aztec, presents simple figures with a thick black outline, whose composition gives off an irresistible and unusual energy. He is the most down-to-earth representative of Pop Art, and portrays things in the plainest possible way.

Throughout his lifetime he made incursions into the world of fashion, art and music. His worldwide commercial success in several genres is the result of the artistic dimension with which he endowed every area he touched. Keith Haring died in 1990.

Robert Indiana, whose real name was Robert Clark, studied at art schools in Indianapolis and Utica, at the School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, at the Edinburgh College of Art and London University.

A painter, a sculptor and artist, in the mid sixties he began to paint in hard-edge style. He used geometric shapes with emblematic words taken from poetic texts inside them, exalting the “American dream” and influenced by Kelly’s work. He also took inspiration from traffic signals and slot

machines. In the sixties he joined a group of Pop artists and specialised in making signs and signals of contemporary life. His brightly coloured works sometimes produce optic ambiguity, as an ironic view of American society. His most important and best-known work both in painting and sculpture is *Love*, sometimes translated into Spanish and even with some versions in Chinese.

In 1964 he collaborated with Andy Warhol in the film *Eat*, and in 1968 the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art held a retrospective exhibition of his work. He now lives on an island off the coast of Maine.

Roy Lichtenstein. He was born in New York, and studied first at the Art Students League in New York and later at Ohio State University, in Columbia, where he became a lecturer after he graduated.

His first artistic style was Abstract Expressionism, but then he started to experiment and make free interpretations of pictures from comic books. In 1951 he held his first solo exhibition at the Carlebach Gallery in New York. After that he began to work as an advertising and technical draughtsman in Cleveland. From 1961 onwards, he devoted himself entirely to art with mass produced commercial images. His comic-book stories, like *Good Morning Darling* (1964), are enlarged cartoon characters, reproduced by hand, with the same point technique and the same colours used to print them.

In his last works he reproduced popular characters from romantic novels and landscapes. He also made sculpture using comic-book effects. In 1993 the Guggenheim Museum in New York held a retrospective of his work that travelled to many countries. He died in 1997.

Pietro Psaiet. He studied sports car design for Enzo Ferrari. Between 1958 and 1962 he studied at the Centro Cultural Italiano in Madrid, where he met Millares, Saura and Tàpies. Later, on a trip to New York, he met Warhol, and started to collaborate with him and explore the language of Pop Art. He died in the tsunami in 2004.

Mel Ramos. He took a Master of Arts degree at Sacramento State College. From 1958, he was a teacher at several institutions. In 1962-63, he began to paint a series of attractive comic superheroes, using thick oleaginous pigment. In 1963 he took part in a group exhibition of Pop Art at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston. In 1964 he held his first solo exhibition at the Bianchini Gallery in New York.

In 1965 he started to work on a specific type of Pop Art iconography, combining topless pin-ups from American magazines with advertisements of different brands. In 1969 he participated in the exhibition *Human Concern* at the Whitney Museum in New York and held a solo exhibition at the Galerie Gegenverkehr in Aachen. He exhibited at the BBAA Gallery of UTAH, in Salt Lake City, in 1972, and also in a Pop Art show at the Whitney Museum in New York in 1974. In 1975 he had a retrospective exhibition at the Haus Lange Museum in Krefeld and in 1977 at the Oakland Museum in California. In 1978 he was included in the exhibition *Art on Art* at the Whitney Museum in New York. He has been a painting a teacher at California State University in Hayward since 1980.

Robert Rauschenberg. Although he began to study Pharmacy at Texas University, between 1947 and 1948 his interest in art led him to the Kansas City Art Institute, where he studied art history, sculpture and music. At this

time he worked as a window dresser and set designer for films and photographic studios.

In 1948 he went to Paris to study at the Académie Julian. Later he studied under Josef Albers and Jack Tworkov at the prestigious Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he became friendly with John Cage. In the early fifties he began to produce abstract painting in white, red or black, underscoring the importance of texture. Rauschenberg met Jasper Johns in 1954. These artists were a link between the generation of the veteran Abstract Expressionists and the young Pop artists. In 1955 he began to develop his “combine paintings”, a mixture of painting, photographic assemblage and collage and *objets trouvés*, usually rubbish produced by the consumer society.

Rauschenberg rebelled against Abstract Expressionism, although he always maintained some elements of it in his work. His encounter with Marcel Duchamp was decisive in his recuperation of Dadaist methods and the incorporation of collage into his work.

In 1962, under the influence of Andy Warhol, he began to experiment with silkscreen, which allowed him to incorporate into his works photographs printed on silk panels that he then put on the canvas in collage fashion and painted with oils. His work is a criticism of the establishment and seeks experimentation and new forms of expression. He is one of the artists who most influenced young creators in the last decades of the 20th century. Currently he lives between Captiva, Florida, and New York.