

THE IMAGE REVEALED:

THE PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION OF THE MUN

OCT 20 2026
PERMANENT



ROBERT CAPA, *SIN TÍTULO*, 1936-1939, PLATA EN GELATINA, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

The photography collection of the Museo Universidad de Navarra has taken shape over time. It began in 1981 with the gift that the photographer José Ortiz Echagüe (1886–1980) had made in the 1960s, and which formally entered the collection after his death. The collection is still growing today, acquiring new works as a living collection. It traces the history of photography in and about Spain from the birth of the medium in 1839 to the present. Although its unifying theme is the image of Spain, the photographers it brings together are all those, Spanish and foreign alike, who worked in the country. Taken together, its holdings allow us to understand photography as a multifaceted phenomenon, one that raises questions about the emergence and development of the discipline and its techniques, about representation and its referential relationship with reality, and about how the image is constructed and how the viewer perceives it. The collection was built on an understanding of photography as a means of documenting reality, both as artistic

expression, with works conceived purely as creative pieces, and as document, with descriptive and documentary works that directly record and reflect reality. Photography was born as a document: irrefutable proof that what it depicted was real and tangible, and therefore a new way of describing reality grounded in the objectivity of the medium rather than the subjectivity of its author. Over time, as the medium came to be accepted as an art form and its techniques developed, photographers opened up new avenues of expression. They no longer confined themselves to recording reality and to defining the photographic object as a document; they also explored the technical possibilities of the medium to create works of an artistic nature, valuable in their own right rather than for the image's connection to the real, in step with the artistic currents of their time.

From the outset, alongside the idea of building a collection of historical Spanish photography, three core aims were set: to conserve and enlarge the holdings, to make

them known to the wider public, and to support research into photography. These aims were consolidated with the creation of the Museum, which was founded to serve a broader audience, to break down stereotypes and to forge new forms of engagement through art and the ideas it puts forward, with contemporary art in all its forms at its core.

The Museum's photography collection can be approached from several complementary angles. From a technical standpoint, it traces the evolution of the medium through the different processes used over its history. The earliest techniques, the daguerreotype and the calotype, are both represented. The calotype holdings are of particular interest, probably the most complete of any Spanish institution, and are accompanied by a significant group of salted paper prints. Equally extensive is the group of albumen prints from wet collodion negatives, which makes up the bulk of the nineteenth-century holdings. Mention must also be made of the carbon prints, both those from José Ortiz Echagüe's gift and other pieces such as the works of Adolph Braun. Finally, as photography developed and became universal from the late nineteenth century onwards, the various gelatin silver processes emerged and came to dominate the field until the arrival of digital photography and artificial intelligence, all of which are also present in the Collection. From a thematic standpoint, it is possible to follow every subject addressed in Spanish photography, allowing cross-cutting readings according to the interests of each viewer: architecture, engineering, urban planning, art, history, fashion, psychology, development, and more. While photography lends itself to many interpretations depending on the vantage point, the subjects in the collection broadly cover the full range of themes the medium has addressed since its origins.

Today, building on the nearly 3,000 photographs, 1,500 paper negatives and 28,800 negatives donated by José Ortiz Echagüe in 1981, the collection comprises some 25,000 photographic objects and 250,000 negatives, together with around 1,500 works in other media, including painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, video art and installation. It is a living collection, both because it continues to grow through new acquisitions and because it provides a basis for the study and understanding of art, through research and through artist residencies in which contemporary artists enter into dialogue with those who came before them.

The Beginnings of Photography: Nineteenth-Century Processes

Photography as such was born in Paris in 1839, when the academician François Arago presented the daguerreotype to the Académie des Sciences; the Museum holds a notable collection of this technique on metal. At almost the same moment, the Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) announced in London his invention of the calotype, which likewise fixed an image on a support,

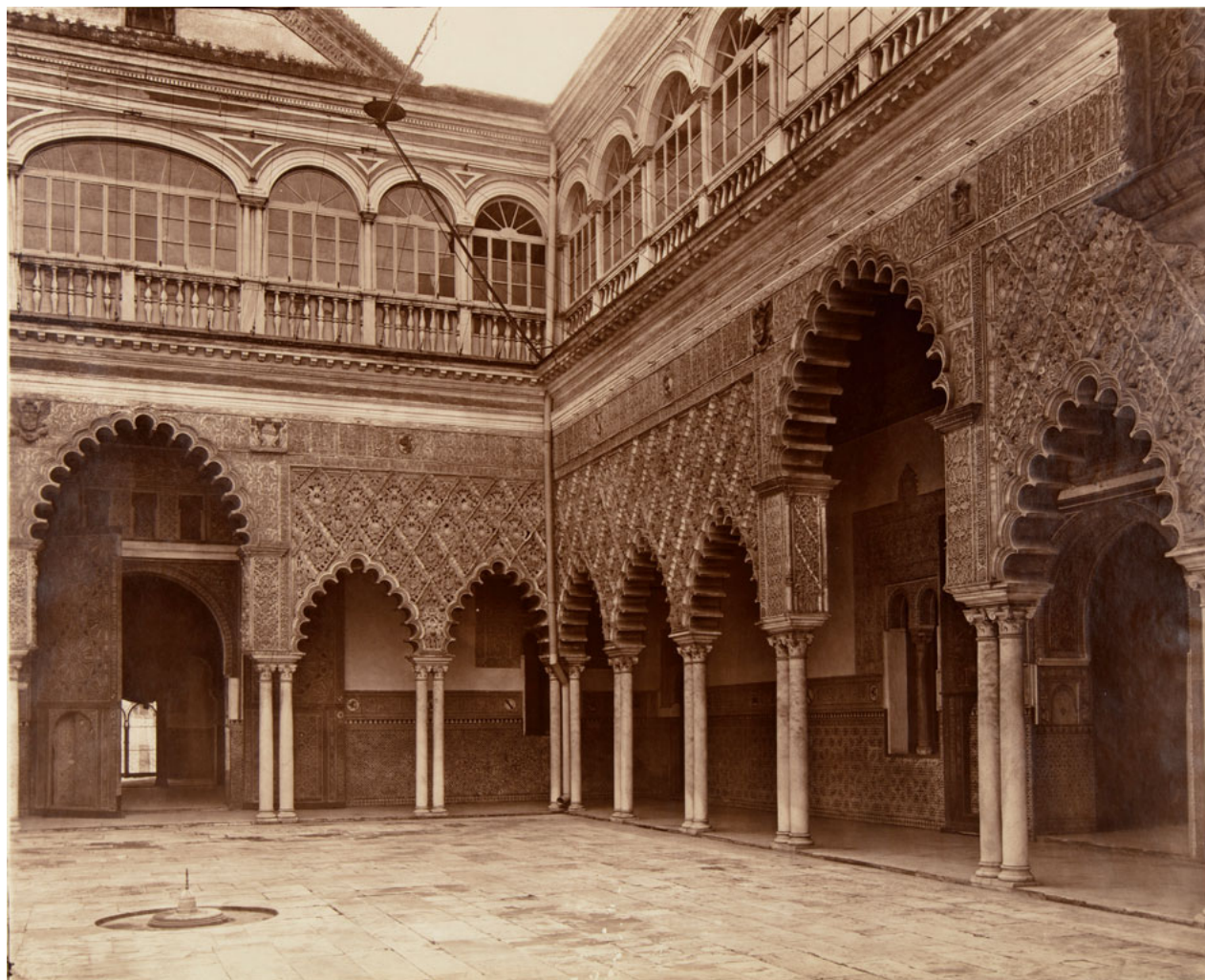
in this case paper. This made serial reproduction possible, one of photography's defining characteristics. Once the early problems of fixing the image had been overcome, and after Talbot's patent on the process had expired, photographic research advanced with this process, the first paper-based photographic technique in history. The Museum holds what is probably the most complete collection of calotypes in any Spanish institution, accompanied by a significant group of salted paper positives. In some cases, such as the works of Gustave de Beaucorps (1825–1906) and Louis De Clercq (1837–1901), both the original negative and the period print made from it survive.

As the technique developed and spread, many European photographers came to Spain, drawn by the fascination the country held within the European Romantic imagination, especially in France. Many came expressly in search of the exotic roots associated with Spain, generally linked to its Arab past and to the world of bandits, Gypsies and flamenco dancers that Andalusia was presumed to harbour, with the Alhambra in Granada and the Reales Alcázares in Seville as the leading subjects of their images. Others included Spain as one stop on a wider Mediterranean journey. To these must be added the foreign photographers who settled in Spain, and the Spaniards who soon took up the new medium themselves. Among the images produced in Spain at this time, portraits of popular types acquired great importance; exported to the rest of the world, they fixed a stereotyped image of Spaniards abroad that persists to this day. Alongside them appear the customary subjects of nineteenth-century photography: urban and monumental views, public works and portraiture.

Advances in photographic processes followed one another in rapid succession during the nineteenth century. In 1851 the calotype and salted paper were superseded by a new kind of negative, wet collodion, printed on albumen paper, which shortened exposure times and improved the definition of the image, making possible the expansion, spread and popularisation of photography. It also brought drawbacks compared with the calotype, however: more complex processing and the fragility of the glass plates used as negatives, a particular problem for travelling photographers. For this reason, some of them, such as Beaucorps and De Clercq, combined the calotype paper negative with albumen printing.

As with the calotype, international photographers recording the image of Spain became a familiar presence, above all in Andalusia, though they gradually ventured to other places, often following roads and railway lines. As noted above, it was these photographers who, on returning home, built the image of Spain abroad from the photographs they had taken and the subjects they had chosen. The country was thus presented in a stereotyped form shaped by Romantic ideals and strongly coloured by a perception of the South as the Orient.

Because the two processes succeeded each other so quickly, many photographers left work in both. One such is the Frenchman Alphonse De Launay (1827–1906), of



ALPHONSE BRAUN, SEVILLA. ALCÁZAR. PATIO DE LAS DONCELLAS, C. 1880, CARBÓN A PARTIR DE NEGATIVO DE COLODIÓN. COLECCIÓN MUSE UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

whom the Museum holds an extensive collection including daguerreotypes, salted paper prints and albumen prints. His work records the customary urban and monumental views as well as Spanish popular types. Other foreign photographers are also represented: the Frenchman Charles Mauzaisse (c. 1823–late nineteenth century), who settled in Granada and opened a studio there, the city, and above all the Alhambra, becoming the main subject of his work; and the Englishman Farnham Maxwell Lyte (1828–1906), who produced a remarkable group of nature views, not only in the tradition of the sublime landscape but also close-up studies focused on detail, taking advantage of the technical possibilities the medium offered. Also foreign-born were Jean Laurent (1816–1886) and the married couple Charles Clifford (1819–1863) and Jane Clifford (1822–1885), key figures in the history of nineteenth-century photography in Spain. They settled in the country and established prolific studios that carried out official commissions for the Government and the Crown, capturing the image of Spain as no one else did. The Museum holds substantial holdings of their work: some 975 photographs by Laurent and 425 by the Cliffords.

Charles Clifford was an English photographer who settled in Madrid and opened a studio in the capital, as-

sisted by his wife Jane, who took charge of producing some of his series, particularly after his death, when she inherited and ran the studio. Clifford photographed Spain's cities, monuments and public works, establishing for the first time how these subjects would be represented in the country. He received commissions from the Government, such as recording Isabella II's journeys through various Spanish provinces, and from institutions in Spain and abroad. The Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid asked him to document the restoration of Spanish monuments, while the South Kensington Museum in London, now the Victoria and Albert Museum, commissioned him to photograph two major Madrid collections: the Royal Armoury, housed in the Royal Palace, and the Dauphin's Treasure, now in the Museo del Prado. After his death, Jane Clifford took over the studio and these projects. Both collections had also been photographed by Laurent, and the differences between their interpretations show how much the photographer's eye shapes the construction of the image.

Jean Laurent, of French origin, also settled in Madrid, where he opened what became one of the most important studios in Spain. His output was vast. Alongside the customary urban and monumental views, it includes series



ALPHONSE DE LAUNAY, *SIN TÍTULO*, C. 1853, PAPEL A LA SAL A PARTIR DE CALOTIPO, COLECCIÓN MUSE UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA



CHARLES CLIFFORD. CANAL DE ISABEL II. PRESA DEL PONTÓN DE LA OLIVA, 1856, PAPEL A LA ALBÚMINA, COLECCIÓN MUSE UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

on the Royal Armoury, public works and Spanish popular types, some of them produced in partnership with local photographers such as José Martínez Sánchez (1807–1874). The first of these series reflects the nineteenth-century interest in documenting art collections that accompanied the emergence of art history as a scientific discipline, creating a corpus of images that allowed works to be classified and methodically catalogued, in the tradition of the eighteenth-century academies. The public works series was commissioned by the Spanish government to record the new infrastructure being built across the country, set alongside examples from earlier periods, and was assembled into five albums sent to the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, two of which are in the Museum's collection. Finally, the series of popular types, which follows the eighteenth-century print tradition on the same subject and the photographs taken by the foreign calotypists who had come to Spain, continued to compile and stereotype the image of the Spaniard held abroad. Laurent produced two such series: one *d'après nature*, taken from life and on location, and another photographing inhabitants of the Spanish regions who came to Madrid in 1874 to offer the produce of their lands to King Alfonso XII on the occasion of his marriage to María Cristina of Austria.

Of great importance, too, was the Frenchman Eugene André Disderi (1819–1889). Besides producing urban and

monumental views, in 1854 he introduced a new format, the *carte de visite*, which revolutionised the medium: a single plate could carry up to eight small images in a standard format, which made photography far cheaper. The format democratised access to photography, giving a broad section of the population, for the first time in history, access to their own image and their own body. Until then, owning a portrait had been the preserve of the upper classes; there were no shop windows in which to catch one's reflection, and access to full-length mirrors was limited. The *carte de visite* thus brought about an important social change, paving the way not only for the development of portraiture but also for psychological reflection on self-perception.

Alongside the foreign photographers working in Spain at this time, we also find local photographers who had begun opening studios in the 1840s. One of them was José Martínez Sánchez (1807–1874), who produced one of the first photographic reportages in Spain: the arrival of Queen Isabella II by sea in Valencia. He also collaborated with Laurent on the photographs for the public works project mentioned above.

Mention must also be made of the carbon prints, a technique that connects with the photographs from José Ortiz Echagüe's gift. The works by Adolph Braun (1812–1877), alongside others from Spain and Egypt, include

two important views of the Alhambra in Granada and the Reales Alcázares in Seville, notable both for their size (at a time when the enlarger did not yet exist and negatives were on glass, with all the difficulties that entailed) and for their colour.

The Consolidation of a Medium: Twentieth-Century Photography

At the end of the nineteenth century, technical developments made photography universal and accessible to all social classes. The invention of the gelatin silver process, which shortened exposure and printing times, came hand in hand with a photographic industry that gave rise to the amateur photographer, who no longer needed to deal with the technicalities of preparing papers or of fixing and printing. This was the moment of the famous slogan coined in 1888 by George Eastman, founder of Kodak: "You press the button, we do the rest."

Photography became aware of the visual and representational possibilities inherent in the medium itself. On the one hand, it began to experiment with its technical possibilities in order to develop an artistic aesthetic in line with the prevailing movements of the early twentieth century, exploring definition, detail, precision, and the interplay of planes, perspectives and light, as well as the possibilities photographic processes offered for constructing the image. On the other, it began to assert its independence and its own character in relation to other forms of artistic expression, such as painting.

As in the other arts, different currents and movements followed one another rapidly in photography, overlapping without a break. Spain was no exception, although these currents arrived there somewhat later than elsewhere. Over the course of the century came Pictorialism; avant-garde photography, which gave rise to advertising photography among other forms; social documentary photography; and war photography. All these currents, spanning a wide range of techniques, subjects and photographers, are represented to a greater or lesser extent in the Museum's collection. From this century the Collection holds the complete archives of four essential figures in Spanish photography: José Ortiz Echagüe (1886–1980), whose gift gave rise to the collection; Josep Brangulí (1879–1945), who recorded the image of Barcelona from 1900 to 1945, in prints produced by Fundación Telefónica as part of a project to bring renewed attention to his work; and Juan Dolcet (1914–1990) and Rafael Sanz Lobato (1932–2015), who documented the image of Spain in the second half of the twentieth century. Comparable to Brangulí's photographs of Barcelona are those taken in Madrid by Alfonso Sánchez García (1880–1953), better known as Alfonso. These images document everything from the daily life of the different social classes, in all its variety, to the political situation, such as the proclamation of the Republic. As in the previous century, foreign photographers continued to come to Spain throughout the twentieth century, no longer in search of exoticism or anthropological imagery, but drawn by the

country's social and political situation and by its culture, as was the case with the Frenchman Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004).

Alongside these photographers' archives, another of the Museum's most important twentieth-century holdings is its photography of the Spanish Civil War. The conflict became a field of activity and development for several photographic currents (documentary, propaganda, advertising and photojournalism), and the use of photography in the Spanish war in turn served as a testing ground for what would later happen in the Second World War. Both sides used photography as a resource, recognising the role images could play in winning support for their cause, both from civil society at large and from foreign governments.

Among the photographers who provide images of the conflict, those who worked for the Republican side predominate, such as Agustín Centelles (1909–1985), the photographer who best documented the events of the war: combat and political developments, as well as the suffering of the civilian population and the plight of refugees. Photography was also used for propaganda in posters, such as those by Pere Catalá Pic (1889–1971), or by anonymous designers, some of whom used images by other photographers, such as Hans Namuth (1915–1990), whose portraits show the militiamen, civilians forced to take up arms to defend their families and their way of life.

As noted, the Spanish war served as a testing ground for photojournalism: it was reported practically live through the dispatches of the journalists covering it, accompanied by photographs that documented and illustrated the published texts. Light cameras such as the Leica gave photographers greater freedom of movement and a wider field of action, allowing them to meet the press's demand for images. Such is the case of the photographs of Endre Ernő Friedmann (1913–1954), better known as Robert Capa, a pseudonym he adopted together with his partner Gerda Taro (1910–1937). The quintessential photojournalist of war, he shows us not only the front and soldiers in action but also refugees and civilians. The collection also includes works by other figures, such as the Russian artist Lazar Markovich Lissitzky (1890–1941), a pioneer in the artistic use of typography, photomontage and editorial design, and the Hungarian photographer Dezso Révai (1903–1996), known as Turai, who served in the International Brigades and photographed, among other subjects, refugees arriving in Madrid as they fled the front, showing how many of them, lacking any other shelter, had to take refuge in the Metro.

After the war, the use of photography in Spain evolved over the second half of the twentieth century. In the first postwar years, when the country's social and economic situation allowed little ambition, many photographers repeated forms associated with the first third of the century, following the prewar avant-garde movements while leaving Pictorialism behind. One such is Francesc Catalá Roca (1922–1998), son of the photographer Francesc Catalá Pic (1889–1971), whose work was still tied to prewar ad-



JUAN DOLCET, *EL EMPALAO*, 1968, GELATINOBROMURO, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA



RAMON MASATS, *SEMINARIO DE MADRID*, 1957, PLATA EN GELATINA, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

vertising photography and would move towards sociological subjects reflecting the social context of the postwar period, opening the way for new generations of photographers.

This initial period of postwar poverty was overcome with the founding of the AFAL group and the emergence of the Madrid School, which had its origins in the La Palangana group, and the Barcelona School, which together led the renewal of Spanish photography. These years were marked by the country's political and social situation. Photography initially centred on social documentation, which gave way to a more sociological approach in which the documentation of popular festivals and traditions also figured prominently. These were, in any case, images rooted in the real, reflecting both the social and the individual context, with the human element always at their core, expressed through direct portraiture. The association of many of these photographers in schools or groups meant that they shared aims, practices and subjects. As already mentioned, the Museum's Collection holds the archives of Juan Dolcet (1914–1990) and Rafael Sanz Lobato (1932–2015), both associated with the Madrid School, whose work gives considerable weight to anthropological documentation while also extending to other subjects such as portraiture. Their work converges at many points, with very similar subjects and compositions and a shared practice of working in series, particularly those recording Spanish popular festivals, celebrations and traditions. Alongside them are other photographers who addressed

the same subjects and shared interests and ties since, whatever school they came from, they met in groups such as *La Palangana*, *La Colmena* and *AFAL*, from which they would renew Spanish photography: Gabriel Cualladó (1925–2003), Francisco Ontañón (1930–2008), Ramón Masats (1931–2024), Ricard Terré (1928–2009) and Joan Colom (1921–2017).

As before, though now from a different perspective, the second half of the twentieth century also brought the work of international photographers who visited Spain, drawn in part by the postwar social context, both urban and rural. The rural world appears in Eugene Smith's (1918–1978) photographs of Deleitosa, anthropological in character and focused on Spain's backwardness and poverty, which also record the exaltation and propaganda of the new regime. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who had already visited Spain before the war, also took photographs reflecting the reality of the new regime.

Finally, the evolution of the collection and its integration into the Museo Universidad de Navarra have broadened the scope of its subject matter, with the start of a new collection devoted to Ibero-America. It is justified by the close cultural, social and political ties between the two regions, so close that one can almost speak of a parallel development of the discipline. Comparisons and affinities are inevitable: for Spanish contemporary art, the art scene in Latin America and its evolution offer a mirror in which to see itself. As with the rest of the Museum's collection, these holdings include both local photographers, notably



RAFAEL SANZ LOBATO, *BERCIANOS DE ALISTE. VIERNES SANTO*, 1971, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA. DONACIÓN RAFAEL SANZ LOBATO

Martín Chambi (1891–1973) with his images of Peru, and leading classic figures such as Graciela Iturbide (b. 1942), Flor Garduño (b. 1957) and Alberto Korda (1928–2001), as well as foreign photographers such as the Spaniard Miguel Bergasa (b. 1951) and the German Andreas Gursky (b. 1955).

Towards Artificial Intelligence: Twenty-First-Century Photography

Over the course of the twenty-first century, photography has undergone major changes, driven by the transformation of its processes and techniques and by shifts in how the medium itself is perceived, in its relationship with viewers and in its ties to reality and the representation of the real. These changes affect every area of photography, from the production of documents about the real to the creation of works of artistic expression. Just as photography's birth in 1839 was accompanied by debate over its relationship with painting, at the turn of the twenty-first century the medium faced new dilemmas with the advent of digital photography, which in turn led to the use of new technologies to create work, in this case software linked to artificial intelligence: a revolution not only in this field but in society at large.

Through new technologies, but also through traditional techniques that are enjoying renewed interest, the Museum's collection continues to grow with new acquisitions, including works produced through *Tender Puentes*,

the artist residency programme run by the Museum. Most of these acquisitions are linked to exhibitions presented at the Museum. These are works and artists that do not confine themselves to recording reality or to defining the photographic object as a document; they also explore the technical possibilities of the medium to create works of an artistic nature, valuable in their own right rather than for the image's connection to the real, in step with the artistic currents of the time and with a focus on the political value of the work of art. Their subjects follow the collection's main lines, covering a wide range from portraiture to photography of cities and monuments, as well as images of the natural world in its many senses. This last is perhaps one of the most recurrent subjects, reflecting contemporary society's concern with the effects of climate change. Joan Fontcuberta (b. 1955) plays with the perception of reality and the real in his two series on herbaria; Valentín Vallhonrat (b. 1956) explores the possibilities of definition and representation; Javier Vallhonrat (b. 1953) shows us the immeasurable and the transformation of the natural world; while Carlos Irijalba (b. 1979) and Cecilia Paredes (b. 1950) address the interaction between humans and nature.

The *Tender Puentes* Artist Residencies

As part of the Museum's strategic and development plan, and originating in the Fondo Fotográfico, an artist residency project called *Tender Puentes* (Building Bridges) was

conceived in 2003 to establish a dialogue between the historical photography in the collection and contemporary artists. The Museum invites contemporary artists, Spanish and international, working in the different fields concerned with the image and its representation, to get to know the Collection and to propose a project in which their work engages with particular pieces, photographers, techniques or subjects in its holdings. Through this programme, artists not only find support for new projects but can also enter into dialogue with those who preceded them, to whom, in a sense, they also lend their voice. By working with the images in the historical photography collection, they reflect on these works and also on questions such as the representation of reality, the construction of the image and its perception by the viewer. All of this opens up new readings of how art is understood and perceived, and of its relationship with society.

Since the programme began, 39 artists have completed projects, each entirely free to choose the subject and the works in the collection on which to base it, whether as physical or conceptual inspiration. Although each developed a project according to their own artistic approach, the projects can be grouped around a number of shared thematic concerns. These themes also follow the threads that run through the Museum's collection and cut across photography from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. One is territory: how it is perceived and related to, its

connection with the viewer and with the historical collection, and how it can be seen from different perspectives, whether social, political, economic or emotional. Artists who addressed these questions include Lynne Cohen (1944–2014), Roland Fischer (b. 1958), Carlos Cánovas (b. 1951) and Bleda y Rosa (b. 1969 and 1970).

Portraiture, one of photography's dominant genres since its birth and one in which the Museum's collection holds outstanding examples, was central to the projects of Pierre Gonnord (1963–2024), with his series on the Gypsies of La Raya and the miners of the Asturian-Leonese coalfield, and of Luis González Palma (b. 1957) in his series *Möbius*. The notion and interpretation of the archive, together with ideas about the construction of the image, can be seen from different perspectives, readings, conceptual links and processes of resignification in the work of Cristina de Middel (b. 1975), Vik Muniz (b. 1961) and Juan Ugalde (b. 1958).

In short, the photography collection of the Museo Universidad de Navarra is a living collection that continues to grow and to serve as the basis for new artistic projects. It spans nearly two hundred years of the medium's existence, from its birth in 1839 to the present, built on and around the image of Spain as captured by Spanish and foreign photographers alike.

Ignacio Miguéliz Valcarlos



PIERRE GONNORD, *MARÍA, JOAO & ISAAC*, 2013, IMPRESIÓN CON TINTAS PIGMENTARIAS, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

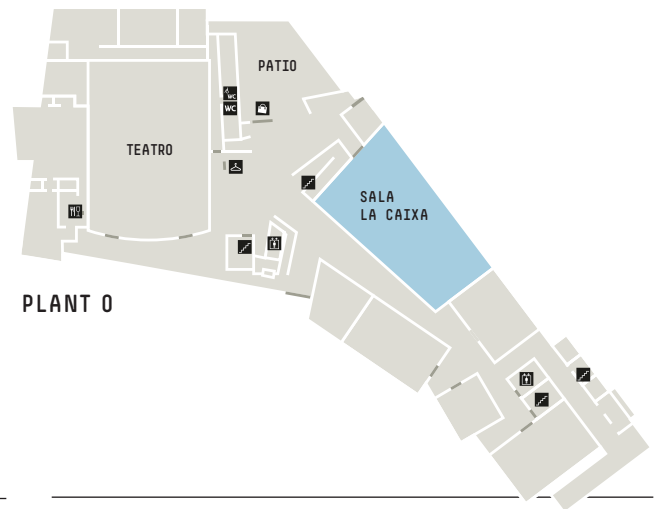


MIGUEL BERGASA, *PROCESIÓN DE VIERNES SANTO*, 1997, IMPRESIÓN CON PIGMENTOS MINERALES SOBRE PAPEL BARITADO, COLECCIÓN MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA. DONACIÓN MIGUEL BERGASA

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