

EXHIBITION

VIRXILIO VIEITEZ

22 October 2010 - 24 April 2011



Virxilio Vieitez. Fermín with his children, Avelino, Bautista and Pepiño, 1957. Courtesy Vieitez Archive

DATES

22 October 2010 - 24 April 2011

VENUE

Ground-floor exhibition rooms

TIMES

Tuesdays to Saturdays
(including public holidays)
from 11:00 21:00.
Sundays from 11:00 to
15:00

CURATOR

Enrica Viganò

PRODUCTION

Exhibition co-produced by MARCO, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vigo, and Fundación Telefónica, Madrid.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Two years after the death of Virxilio Vieitez (Soutelo de Montes, Pontevedra, Spain, 1930-2008), the photographer's eagerly awaited retrospective exhibition has opened in the ground-floor rooms of MARCO in co-production with Fundación Telefónica. The existence of a large family archive with all his production has made the detailed investigation process possible. Besides the better-known work by Vieitez, the exhibition contains many unpublished pieces, including colour and vintage photographs, in a selection organised by the Italian photography specialist Enrica Viganò. The show includes 293 photographs exhibited in the rooms themselves (261 in black and white and 32 in colour), more than half of which are unpublished works, together with the 157 vintage photographs in the display cases. The exhibition is completed with a biographical room and the screening of the documentary *Virxilio Vieitez. Más allá del oficio* [Beyond his Trade], which was made by José Luis López Linares in 2005 and includes interviews with Virxilio and his daughter Keta Vieitez.

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

The Virxilio Vieitez exhibition will then move to the rooms of Fundación Telefónica in Madrid and then on to other towns and cities.

EXHIBITION PROJECT SUMMARY

The year 2010 ends with a great individual exhibition on the ground floor of MARCO. The Virxilio Vieitez (Soutelo de Montes, Pontevedra, 1930-2008) exhibition has been co-produced with Fundación Telefónica and takes place two years after the photographer's death and in what would have been the eightieth anniversary of a photographer whose work, in the light of an a posteriori analysis, has acquired unquestionable artistic and social value thanks to the confluence of various genres and factors that place him today among the great names in the world of photography.

The Virxilio Vieitez archive is an important part of our cultural heritage and is maintained in Soutelo de Montes (Pontevedra, Spain), the town in which the photographer was born in 1930 and in which he worked almost all his life. His daughter, Keta Vieitez, exhibited her father's photographs for the first time in a self-produced exhibition in his hometown in 1997. The exhibition included some of the photographs that were later to be considered as Vieitez's greatest works. The first retrospective exhibition on his work was presented in Vigo at the Fotobiennial of 1998, curated by Manuel Sendón and Xosé Luis Suárez Canal. Other later exhibitions offered a limited selection of his works from the material that is available.

For this exhibition, which seeks to give a complete view of his work, the investigation work has taken into consideration almost all the negatives dated between 1953 and 1980. More than 50,000 have been analysed and unpublished material (in sealed boxes and tins that contained yards of film that had never been developed after its first use, i.e. after the customer had commissioned the work) has also been recovered.

Besides photographs that have already been shown, which can be considered as classics of Spanish photography, the exhibition includes **unpublished work** that has been selected after a lengthy study. This work reveals Vieitez's originality when interpreting the genre of photographic portraits. One room is devoted entirely to photographs taken for **identity documents**. All these photographs use a white background and offer an ethnographical representation of great value through the faces of people whose own features and uniqueness contribute to the portrait of a people. The exhibition closes with Vieitez's **first colour photographs**, which mark the progress of an era in which technological innovation coincided with technological and social changes that also forced and distorted the language of photography. The exhibition also includes a **biographical room** and the screening of a **documentary** by José Luis López Linares (RTVE, 2005) including interviews with Virxilio and his daughter Keta Vieitez, which add a new external viewpoint through a journey into the author's world.

In 1993, Vieitez gave his daughter complete freedom to use his photographs for the sake of art and, since then, she has always applied a system focus on guaranteeing the high quality of the prints and the selection of the works. The photographs on exhibition are modern copies made in specialised laboratories. Next to them and for the first time, in the showcases and in the biographical room, there are vintage photographs, developed by Vieitez himself and recovered in part from the homes of the families for which they were taken.

TEXT BY THE CURATOR

"When photography was invented, nobody imagined how difficult its future would be as far as schemes and definitions were concerned. However, its destiny had already been dotted with contributions not only in the field of technology (the most foreseeable factor), but also in its enjoyment, language and value. The very nature of photography implies a certain amount of ambiguity, which makes it difficult to place an image in a specific context. A photograph can be taken for a very specific reason and then acquire new connotations.

One excellent example of the capacity for metamorphosis in the DNA of photography is the work by Virxilio Vieitez. A photographer who knew, or rather felt, that he was the best in his trade, but did not consider himself as an author and even less so imagined that, 50 years later, his production would have been recognised thanks to its 'authorial' and artistic value, which has placed it in a category populated by a wide variety of genres and abilities.

Virxilio Vieitez always took his photographs as the result of a commission, travelling far and wide across Terra de Montes to photograph his customers in their homes. His work contains all the characteristics of the country photographer who recorded the events and moments of the local families' lives (from christenings to weddings, first communions and funerals); however, unlike others, he had a special talent for giving his portraits an air of solemnity. His style was unmistakable. He had extraordinary intuition and a capacity for the staging of the photograph, in which he included objects and suggestive poses that were almost surreal but which, in spite of themselves, then became fragments of truth closely bound to the environment.

His role as a town photographer in his day (from the end of the 1950s to the 1970s) was a very prestigious position and suited the character of someone as special as Vieitez: intelligent, quick, competent, instinctive and aware of his skills. He gave his models orders in a firm way that left no room for discussion and with a clarity that guaranteed the result. 'I studied the situation and, when I squeezed the trigger, I knew my shot was on target.' Virxilio Vieitez never wasted a shot; he was a more than reliable professional, a guarantee for his fellow citizens in the province of Pontevedra.

From the early studio portraits (in keeping with the traditions of the time) to those he set outdoors, which were his favourites; from photographs of ceremonies to small identity card photographs, as well as the portraits taken to be sent to many relatives who had emigrated: today, his images constitute an excellent ethnographical testimony that has become the memory of a people and an era.

The Virxilio Vieitez archive is an important part of our cultural heritage and is maintained in Soutelo de Montes (Pontevedra), the town in which the photographer was born in 1930 and died in 2008 and in which he worked almost all his life. His daughter, Keta Vieitez, was the first to grasp the priceless historical and artistic value of her father's photographs, which she exhibited for the first time in a self-produced exhibition in an improvised venue in Soutelo in 1997. Since then, there have been other exhibitions that have focused on an initial reading of the more accessible material.

On this occasion, the exhibition offers a sample laden with unpublished material and the investigation work has been more detailed and extensive: Keta Vieitez, who maintains the archive with all her passion, has provided us with a wide variety of negatives, documents, original prints, objects and memorabilia. This analysis of the testimonies of a lifetime has made it possible to reconstruct a truly unique career that is on the one hand exemplary and, on the other, extremely human. The biographical rooms show a fundamental part of an exhibition which, with its 'specific pieces' seeks to underline our premises and reflections on the metamorphosis of photography.

As the curator, I have been privileged to work with the original material of a photographer whose style has left its mark, rightly and indelibly so, on the history of the photographic portrait. It holds its place in one's visual memory thanks to its formal elegance, which makes each of Vieitez's photographs intense, clear and powerful".

Enrica Viganò

Exhibition curator

Virxilio Vieitez (Soutelo de Montes, Pontevedra, 1930-2008)

Biography

Virxilio Vieitez was born in Soutelo de Montes (Pontevedra, Spain) in 1930. When he was 18 years of age, he travelled to the Pyrenees in the Spanish region of Aragon, where he worked as a mechanic and purchased his first camera. He then moved to Catalonia and worked in the town of Palamós as assistant to the photographer Juli Pallí, who taught him the secrets of his trade. In 1955, he returned to Galicia and opened a photographic studio in the town where he was born, working for customers across the Terra de Montes district and portraying entire generations of local people, especially from the beginning of the 1960s, when it became mandatory for identity documents to bear a photograph. In only a short time, he became the most popular photographer for ceremonies, weddings, portraits, litigations, funerals and christenings and his camera recorded the most important moments of the lives of the people and families in his local area. Most of Vieitez's works are in black and white; however, after the 1970s he also used colour photography. Although his most prolific stage came in later decades, Virxilio Vieitez continued to work as a photographer until the end of the 1980s, combining his work with other jobs. In 2006, his health started to deteriorate and he passed away in Soutelo de Montes, the town where he was born, on 15 July 2008.

Individual exhibitions

- 1997 Enriqueta Vieitez organised the first Virxilio Vieitez exhibition in Soutelo de Montes, Pontevedra
- 1998-2001 *Virxilio Vieitez, 1955-1965*, VIII Fotobiennal, Vigo, Spain, 1998; Museo do Pobo Galego, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1999; 'Encontros da Imagen de Braga', Fundação Cupertino de Miranda, Famalicão, Portugal, 1999; Canal de Isabel II, Madrid, Spain, 1999; Pazo da Cultura, Pontevedra, Spain, 1999; Museum of El Bierzo, Ponferrada, Spain, 2000; Fundación Caixa Galicia, A Coruña, Spain, 2001; Centro Torrente Ballester, Ferrol, Spain, 2001/ Convento de San Francisco, Ourense, Spain, 2001/ Instituto Jovellanos, Gijón, Spain, 2001/ 'Explorafoto', Patio de Escuelas de la Universidad, Salamanca, Spain, 2001
- 1999 *Virxilio Vieitez*, Galerie VU', Paris, France
- 2003 *Virxilio Vieitez. Álbum*, FOAM, Amsterdam, Holland, 2003
- 2003 *Virxilio Vieitez. Fotografías*, Câmara Municipal, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal
- 2006 *Virxilio Vieitez. Retrospective Exhibition*, IV Xavier Miserachs Photography Biennial, Municipal Theatre, Palafrugell, Spain
- 2006 *Virxilio Vieitez*. FNAC, Madrid, Spain. Travelling exhibition (Madrid, Bilbao)
- 2009 *Sueños por encargo*. Juana de Aizpuru Gallery, Madrid, Spain
- 2009 *Historias de una vida*. Centre d'Arts d'Escaldes-Engordany, Andorra

Collective exhibitions

- 1999 *150 Years of Photography in Spain*, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Madrid. Organiser: Publio López Mondejar. Travelling exhibition (Oaxaca, Mexico City, Oporto, Salamanca, Manila, Budapest, Valencia)
- 1999 *Collezionismi, la collezione della Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain*, Palazzo delle Papesse, Siena, Italy
- 1999 *Rendez-vous de l'Histoire*, Blois, France
- 2000 PHotoEspaña 2000. *Spain yesterday and today: scenarios, customs and protagonists of a century*, MNCARS, Madrid, Spain. Travelling exhibition (Jaén, Vitoria, La Coruña)
- 2000 *Private Diaries*, Centre Cultural Fundació "la Caixa", Granollers. Travelling exhibition (Vic, Oviedo)
- 2001 *Graphic memory of Spanish immigration*, BBVA, Madrid. Travelling exhibition (Europe, Ibero-America)
- 2001 *The keys to the 20th century*, Art and Science Museum, Valencia, Spain
- 2001 *VU' à la Fnac. 15 ans de l'Agence VU'*, Fnac, Paris, France

- 2002 *The Spirit of Family*, Photographic Centre, Skopelos, Greece
- 2002-2004 *Alter Ego. Antropologies involuntaires*, Mundaneum Museum, Mons, Bélgica/Jeu de Paume - Site Sully, Paris, 2003/Palma de Mallorca, 2003/FOAM, Amsterdam, Holland
- 2003-2004 *Les Choix d'Henri Cartier-Bresson*, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, France/ *Al gusto de Cartier-Bresson*, CaixaForum, Barcelona, Spain, 2004
- 2003 *Le pire est à venir. Images contemporaines du monde*, Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saone, France
- 2003 *Uniques*, Galerie VU', Paris, France
- 2004 *O feito fotográfico. Colección fotográfica do Concello de Vigo 1984-2000*, MARCO, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vigo, Spain
- 2004 *Photography and Art. Variations in Spain 1900-1980*, MARCO, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vigo, Spain; PhotoEspaña, Cultural Centre of La Villa, Madrid, Spain; CAAM Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas, Spain
- 2004 *La Collection Ordóñez Falcón - Une passion partagée*, Le Botanique, Brussels, Belgium
- 2004-2005 *The Ecstasy of Things*, Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland/*L'estasi delle cose nell'arte*, Spazio Oberdan, Milan, Italy
- 2004 *La alegría de mis sueños*, I International Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Art of Seville, Monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas de la Isla de La Cartuja, Seville, Spain
- 2004 *Colección Fotográfica do Concello de Vigo*, Portuguese Photography Centre, Oporto, Portugal
- 2005 *Human landscape*, VI Encounters of African Photography of Bamako, Musée National du Mali, Bamako, Mali
- 2006 *History of photography in Spain*, Fundación Caixa Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
- 2006 *Photrapidsme*, Galerie VU', Paris, France
- 2007 *Rencontres d'Arles 2007*, Arles, France
- 2009 *A Little History of Photography*, CGAC, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
- 2010 *Uniques*, Galerie VU', Paris, France

Monographic publications

- Manuel Sendón, Xosé Luis Suárez Canal. *Virxilio Vieitez. Álbum*, ed. Centro de Estudios Fotográficos, Vigo, 1998
- Joan Fontcuberta, José Luis Canal, Manuel Sendón, Marcial Gondar. *Virxilio Vieitez. O Retrato*, ed. Universidade de Vigo, Grupo de Investigacións Fotográficas, 2000
- Virxilio Vieitez*. Magazine *Photovision* No. 29 (monographic issue), IG Fotoeditor, Utrera, Seville, 2000
- Laura Terré. *Virxilio Vieitez*, Col. Photobolsillo, La Fábrica Editorial, Madrid, 2008

Collective publications

- Diarios íntimos* (exhibition catalogue), ed. Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, 2000
- España Ayer y Hoy: escenarios, costumbres y protagonistas de un siglo*, ed. España Nuevo Milenio, Madrid, 2000
- Horacio Fernández et al. *Fotografía y Arte. Variaciones en España 1900-1980* (exhibition catalogue MARCO, Vigo, CAAM, Las Palmas), La Fábrica Editorial, Madrid, 2004
- Le choix d'Henri Cartier-Bresson* (exhibition catalogue), ed. HCB Foundation, 2003 /ed. Fundació "la Caixa", 2004
- Publio López Mondejar. *Historia de la fotografía en España*, Barcelona, ed. Lunwerg, 2005
- Magazine *Club Cultura 11* (photographic report travelling exhibition FNAC), FNAC, Madrid, 2006
- Joelle Bolloch. *Post mortem*, Col. Photo Poche, ed. Actes Sud, Paris, 2007
- Memoria gráfica de la emigración española*, ed. Ministry of Employment and Immigration, Madrid, 2009

Documentaries

- José Luis López Linares. *Virxilio Vieitez. Más allá del oficio*, Cultural.es, RTVE, 2005
[Included in the exhibition]

GENERAL INFORMATION

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Enrica Viganò is a journalist, exhibition organiser and founder of Admira, an agency based in Milan and incorporated in 1997 for the organisation of cultural events related to photography. With Admira, she has curated various individual exhibitions (Peter Beard, Edward Burtynsky, Robert Frank, Mario Giacomelli, Duane Michals, Ugo Mulas, Martin Munkacsi, Max Pam, Walter Rosenblum, Jan Saudek, Eugene Smith and Jonathan Torgovnik) and collective exhibitions (*Photo League: New York 1936-1951; De cerca nadie es normal; Fotógrafos insospechados. Celebridades detrás del objetivo*), as well as anthological exhibitions (*NeoRealism. The new image in Italy, 1932-1960*). From 1992 to 1997, she directed the Diaframma-Kodak Cultura Gallery of Milan, organising more than 80 exhibitions, including works by photographers such as Gisele Freund, Luis González Palma, Lewis W. Hine, Inge Morath and Andrés Serrano. Since the first edition of 1998, she has worked with PHotoEspaña as curator of exhibitions and catalogues, international project manager (1999) and guest curator (2003). She has also directed the first four editions of Campus PHE, a workshop and conference programme with maestros in international photography (2004-2007). Between 2001 and 2005, she worked on the promotion of emerging photography under the direction of the ClicArt Gallery of Milan and made a monographic publication on each artist. Since 2001, she has been the artistic director of Foto&Photo, an international photography Festival by Cesano Maderno, Milan. The festival, which is characterised by an extensive programme of exhibitions, includes interdisciplinary conferences and symposiums that bring together subjects from the areas of philosophy, criticism and photography collections. Since 2005, she has been a member of Oracle, an international association of photography curators that includes the most important museums, institutions and independent curators in the world. Besides other publications, she opened the Admira Edizioni publishing company in 2003, which has published titles that include *Mario Giacomelli, NeoRealismo. La nuova immagine in Italia 1932-1960*, *Walter Rosenblum. In cerca di Pitt Street* and *Duane Michals 50*.

CATALOGUE

On the occasion of this exhibition, MARCO of Vigo and Fundación Telefónica are to publish a catalogue with texts by several authors, including the historian Naomi Rosenblum, who places Vieitez in the context of international photography, a literary essay by the writer and journalist Antonio Lucas, a historical-anthropological analysis by Ramón Villares and a text by the curator, Enrica Viganò, together with a biography and bibliography of the author by Lucia Orsi, images and information of the works included in the exhibition.

COMPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL EXHIBITION

'PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANOTHER ERA'

From 22 October 2010 to 24 April 2011

As a complement to the VIRXILIO VIEITEZ exhibition, the library-documentation centre offers a bibliographical exhibition of historical photography, with selections from catalogues of authors and eras that reflect moments of everyday life and events in history through photography.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

'THE INSTANT STANDING STILL'

From 22 October 2010 to 24 April 2011

Visits and workshops for school children and families based on the VIRXILIO VIEITEZ exhibition

INFORMATION AND VISITS

The staff members in the rooms are at visitors' disposal for any question they may have or information they may need about the exhibition, as well as for the usual guided tours:

- Every day at 18:00
- Customised visits for groups by appointment. Please call 986 113900

REQUESTS FOR GRAPHIC MATERIALS

EXHIBITION

'VIRXILIO VIEITEZ'**GRAPHIC MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS:**

CD including texts and photographs of the exhibition in different formats.

IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE DOCUMENTATION, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT BY E-MAIL, FAX OR MAIL POST TO:**MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo**

Rúa Príncipe 54

36202 Vigo (Pontevedra). Spain

Communication & Press Department

Marta Viana Tomé

Pilar Souto Soto

Tel. +34 986 113908/113903

Fax +34 986 113901

marta.viana@marcovigo.com

pilar.souto@marcovigo.com

Please, specify: the image format required, as well as the medium for which the documentation is requested.

Format required:		
Name and surname:	Interests:	Telephone:
Title/position:	Address:	Fax:
Medium:	City and post code:	E-mail:
Section/ Programme:	Alternative address:	Other:

We would appreciate it if you could send us an issue of the published report to our Communication Department.