

PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION

PORTRAITS OF ANOTHER CENTURY

Photography Collection of the City Council of Vigo

July 6th – September 9th 2007 **SALAS DE EXPOSICIÓN DE LA PRIMERA PLANTA**



DATES

July 6th – September 9th 2007

LUGAR

Exhibition galleries on the first floor

HOUR

Tuesday to Saturday (holidays included),
from 11am to 9pm
Sundays, from 11am to 3pm

PRODUCTION

MARCO, Museo de Arte
Contemporánea de Vigo

CURATED BY

MARCO Exhibition Department

Left: Manuel Ferrol. *Untitled* (from the series *Emigración*), 1957

ARTISTS: 17

- **Archivo Panateca** (El Salvador)
- **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** (Mexico City, Mexico, 1902)
- **Raúl Corrales** (Ciego de Ávila, Cuba, 1925)
- **Antoine D'Agata** (Marsella, France, 1961)
- **Jack Delano** (Kiev, Ukraine, 1914)
- **Federico Fernández** (Ville d'Eu, France, 1939)
- **Manuel Ferrol** (A Coruña, 1923)
- **Flor Garduño** (Mexico City, Mexico, 1957)
- **Mario Giacomelli** (Ancona, Italy, 1925)
- **Claudia Gordillo** (Managua, Nicaragua, 1954)
- **Graciela Iturbide** (Mexico City, Mexico, 1942)
- **William Klein** (New York, USA, 1928)
- **Dorothea Lange** (New Jersey, USA, 1895)
- **Rusell Lee** (Illinois, USA, 1903)
- **Arthur Rothstein** (New York, USA, 1915)
- **Ricard Terré** (Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona, 1928)
- **Virxilio Vieitez** (Soutelo de Montes, Pontevedra, 1930)

WORKS ON EXHIBITION

The exhibition **PORTRAITS OF ANOTHER CENTURY** is a selection of 36 photographs from the archives of the **Photography Collection of the City Council of Vigo**, which since 2003 has been on loan to MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Vigo.

SYNTHESIS OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

The Photography Collection of the City Council of Vigo is an important archive that facilitates an analysis of some of the key moments in the history of photography. In this new look at the contents of the collection, **PORTRAITS OF ANOTHER CENTURY** offers a walk through the 20th century –now a century of the past– with a selection of portraits, one of the first genres with which early photographers experimented and one that evolved alongside the medium as it advanced over the years.

When **Manuel Ferrol** captured the departure of Spaniards immigrating to America in 1957, he chose a fragment that not only showed but also signified the political or social reality of which we are a part. In this commission offered by the Catholic Emigration Commission, the photographer's point of view becomes one with the "objective" record. In the photographs taken by **Virxilio Vieitez** in the same time period, we discover a Galicia steeped in subjectivity. The scenes captured in a completely natural setting, in lieu of the traditional studio set, are populated by persons – perhaps the same ones portrayed by Manuel Ferrol – who look directly at the camera, accompanied by references, iconographies and disguises that invite us to explore beyond the image.

In a brief essay, John Berger repeatedly used the phrase, "I have decided that it is worthwhile to record what I am seeing" to decode the role of the photographer faced with an event that he is about to freeze with his camera. This event, which is found not only in the image but also in the context and the moment when it was taken, refers to the absence and presence, to the visual and contextual content and to the photographer's interpretative role. The different perspectives shown in **PORTRAITS OF ANOTHER CENTURY** invite us to see photography as a mediator and witness of our historical, social and political reality.

Ricard Terré took these photographs in the same period as Ferrol and Vieitez. His compositions, his shots, his point of view defy traditional labels and are far removed from the socio-documentary nature of the other photographers' work. Their form is reminiscent of the reverse angle and wide angle shots of **William Klein** or the movement and blurriness of **Giacomelli**. They differ in form from the humour of **Manuel Álvarez Bravo** and his disciple **Graciela Iturbide**, who coaxes a smile from us with the pose of a cross-dressing man, and they also differ from the nationalism of Mexican Indian **Flor Garduño** and the defiant view in **Antoine D'Agata's** works. In this exhibition, the portrait acts as a representation and acknowledgement of our history, of our feelings or even of an instant in life that will forever pervade the gaze of a stranger who is suddenly a stranger no more.

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The fraction of a second, which some photographers adopted as the foundation of their work, can be clearly seen in the portraits taken by **Federico Fernández** in 1979 of Venezuela as the destination of countless Galician emigrants and exiles, including the photographer himself, whose playful portraits with a festive air contrasted with his political struggles in that era. These faces are the opposite of those reflected in the photographs of **Dorothea Lange** –a “hungry and desperate” 32-year-old mother– **Jack Delano**, **Arthur Rothstein** and **Russell Lee**, witnesses of the economic depression that devastated the United States half a century earlier and gave rise to the project of “pictorial documentation of rural areas and rural problems” undertaken by the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

The events with which we opened our discourse take on a literal connotation when we analyse the Sandinista revolution through **Claudia Gordillo**’s images, the photographs of the El Salvador of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (**Panateca Archive**) or the images taken by **Raúl Corrales**, a reporter who has managed to capture unique moments of the Cuban revolution. These are evident examples of documentary photography that would encourage us to reopen the debate on the plastic nature of photojournalism. But that’s another story.

QUOTATIONS AND TEXTS BY THE ARTISTS

"One has to be ready to jump in. The photographer uses the reality that the opportunity of art offers him. But he never masters it, never conquers it. Reality, the man on the street, is free and unpredictable. Somehow, the photographer has to anticipate the movements, foresee them. He has to be alert and flexible, ready for sudden changes of plan."

Ricard Terré

"I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was 32. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it."

Dorothea Lange

"I photographed Arthur Coble and his sons Milton and Darrel as they did chores, but the vicious winds made it difficult to see and breathe. As dust began to fill the air, I headed for my car and the Cobles started walking to the farmhouse. When I got in my car, I wanted to wave goodbye. I turned and saw the family fighting the wind and took this photograph – the last frame on the roll of film."

Arthur Rothstein

"People have always debated whether or not photography is art. I didn't think I was creating artwork when I was taking photographs. I wasn't interested in producing a work of art to put in a museum for the few people who visit museums to see. I wanted to produce images of reality as I saw it, so that it could be reproduced in books, newspapers, magazines and exhibitions – so that as many people as possible would see them. That was our attitude, that of those of us who worked in that famous Farm Security Administration group. But it turned out that we, most of the photographers there, had artistic sensibility. Although we didn't try to create works of art, some of the pieces inevitably became artworks. But that wasn't the intention; the intention was to distribute them as widely as possible."

Jack Delano

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"[...] Photographic shots are owing to the chance turn of situations, but the obsessions remain the same. Nocturnal drifts, bodies left behind, the rawness of flesh and of the photographic material. Translate into a split due to the mixture of bodies and feelings, in an incessant shifting of the line between the photographer and his subject that disappear, forever exhausted, between two ephemeral encounters. Lucid photography must enquire into the disturbing conditions of its experience between the eye and the gaze, the machine and the subconscious, the fundamental impurity of its relationship with the real world and the fictitious.

It is not our outlook on the world that matters but our most intimate relations with it. Composition, light, narration –these are no longer the fundamental questions. What remains is the perspective that justifies the photographic act, the interferences of experience and mise-en-scène, the material, the role of the character, the incoherencies of sequencing –images, like words, feel lonely when isolated– and the awareness that I am the actor, author and director of my own scenes. Therefore, through the maniacal reconstruction of disordered experiences, I can use the world for my own ends and, as a rather solitary experience, reshape and transform it to suite my fancy, make it so that, without the images, the world no longer exists."

Antoine D'Agata

REQUEST FOR GRAPHIC MATERIAL

EXHIBITION

'PORTRAITS OF ANOTHER CENTURY.'

Photography Collection of the City Council of Vigo'

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

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