

PRESS RELEASE

MANUEL COLMEIRO. Spaces and Framings



Manuel Colmeiro. *Paisaxe*, 1935. Oil on canvas. 65,5 x 82 cm. Collection Familia Colmeiro

24 January – 6 September, 2020

MARCO, 1st floor front exhibition halls

Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday (inc. holidays) from 11am to 2:30pm and from 5pm to 9pm.

Sunday from 11am to 2:30pm

Produced by: MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Curated by: Xosé Carlos López Bernárdez

Coordination: Pilar Souto Soto

+ INFO en <http://www.marcovigo.com/actuais>

OVERVIEW

The MARCO opens its 2020 program of exhibitions with a self-produced exhibition, curated by Xosé Carlos López Bernárdez. New interpretations to the work of one of the key painters in the history of Galician Art: **Manuel Colmeiro**.

Entitled *Spaces and framings*, and conformed by a selection of works from the bailment and different Collections, accompanied by documentary material, this exhibition is configured based on careful research and reinterpretation of the meaning, objectives and impact of Colmeiro's work. A different vision, more contemporary than historicist, that tries to bring new views and approaches. Special emphasis is placed on the involvement of the artist in the debates around figuration art in Europe and America of the twenties and thirties, war drawings, and other less known moments of his work.

The exhibiton is designed as an interpretation of the work of Manuel Colmeiro, and we review his career since the beginning of his Argentine training until his definitive return to Galicia, influencing his relationship with the artistic spaces where he developed his work: —Buenos Aires, Paris, Galicia. Colmeiro's key contribution to the formation of the Renovation Movement of Galician Art is highlighted, thus comparing his works with those of other Galician artists —Maside, Souto, Torres, Laxeiro, Virxilio Blanco— and with other contexts of international modernity, especially Argentina.

The “modern” realism of Colmerio and the Os Novos movement served as the dominant direction adopted in the Galician avant-garde's ideologies, with a clear desire for the artistic praxis to be guided by the double critical chant for identity and modernity: reflecting the essence of what it was to be Galician, yet without renouncing the idea of being modern

As with many of the interwar realist movements, the movement created by Colmeiro and other Galician painters emerged due to their acknowledgment of this idea that they were effectively heirs of a tradition. We are talking about a heritage that they were longing both to understand more deeply and to discover the essential aspects concealed within; a process which would require its modernization but by no means its destruction. In this aspect they coincided with other artistic phenomena of the time including the Italian painters of the *Novecento*, the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and the *Nuevos Realismos* of Latin America –who were in contact with those who would go on to form part of Colmeiro's career path in Argentina.

Manuel Colmeiro. *Spaces and framings*, therefore, emphasizes the contexts, the dialogues with other actors, their insertion into the aesthetic currents with which the painter lives and in the different geographical and cultural spaces where he develops his long life and artistic career.

On the occasion of the show, a comprehensive catalogue will be published. It will include an essay by the curator, images of the works exhibited and extensive documentation resulting from the whole research process.

A WORD BY THE CURATOR

*Manuel Colmeiro. **Espaces and framings*** is designed as an interpretation of the work of Manuel Colmeiro (Chapa, Silleda, 1901-Salvaterra de Miño, 1999), a fundamental figure of Galician painting of the last century.

We review his career since the beginning of his Argentine training until his definitive return to Galicia, influencing his relationship with the artistic spaces where he developed his work: Buenos Aires in early twenties; Galicia before the Civil War; the exile and the link to the American artistic context, again in Argentina, between 1937 and 1948. Also, his insertion in post-war Paris and his close relationship with the Galician and Spanish cultural environment, since the fifties.

Colmeiro's key contribution to the formation of the Renovation Movement of Galician Art is highlighted, through a painting arising from popular elements to shape a new perception of Galician social and historical reality. For this purpose, we compare his works with those of other Galician artists —Maside, Souto, Torres, Laxeiro, Virxilio Blanco— and with “divergent” contexts of international modernity, especially Argentina.

The project aims to show how the work of our painter is marked by the determination to create an alternative to the dominant cultural *construct*. A painting that reinforces the identity character in a (Galician) society in which a markedly self-referential speech took shape, while discovering the possibilities of an identity formulation from modernity.

Manuel Colmeiro's career begins in Buenos Aires towards the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s. There, the atmosphere resounds with the echoes of the international avant-garde and fondly concerned about social issues. Upon returning to Galicia in 1926, Colmeiro's work orbit around a the *Os Novos* movement. His work is debtor of an interwar figurativeness, inspired in elements from popular tradition focused in topics such as the landscape or scenes resonant with social content. In his early Galician works he uses a sober palate, with static figures, avoiding the individualization of any of the faces and giving the pieces somewhat of a sculptural aspect. Works from this period show their testimonial value. In Colmeiro's hands, anonymous, popular figures become iconic references.

The artist develops powerful iconic images of several of his core themes: peasants at work; mother-goddess motherhoods that conceal a subterranean and even dramatic sense; female models in the way of emblems of peasant women that allow him to build generic values of allegorical root.

Colmeiro's works from the Civil War are very singular, with more expressionist strokes than his previous works. They show the traces of the conflict, they transform his characteristic compositions, as with his maternities, representing suffering. They are expressions of the pain, of the tearing that the brutality and drama of the war provoke in the artist. They show a certain oneirism, sometimes starting from an iconography that reminds us of religious piety wrapped in a Goyesque scent.

In exile, after the Civil War, Colmeiro constructed a language of strong lyricism, in which the evocation of the Galician world is a constant. The memory and the dream of the distant land come to the front. His painting works as a reunion, but it also serves as a permanent analysis and formal refinement, which reaches a successful balance.

Colmeiro's mature work keeps its figurative principles and the same thematic motifs, which constitute real series. He gives greater primacy to chromatic and light values and returns to his native and nurturing landscape. It is a painting that constantly returns to the deepest sources of the authentic sensations of life.

Xosé Carlos López Bernárdez

Exhibition curator

About the curator

Xosé Carlos López Bernárdez (Vigo, 1958) taught Galician Language and Literature until 2018. He took a degree in Geography and History, Art History section. He is an essayist of artistic and literary themes and exhibitions curator. He usually collaborates in newspapers and magazines.

His work in the field of cultural analysis has two main lines: the first one is devoted to the study of Galician literature in the 20th century, paying special attention to avant-garde movements. The second one is focused on the field of art history, oriented to the construction of analysis, mainly about Galician art, which implies a decentralization of the stories (breaking the centre/periphery scheme). In his works he analyses the gaps in the study of Galician art and on the displacement of our narratives. These narratives are absent in a history of art written by a centralizing gaze in which we do not recognize ourselves, and where many works have no space.

Bernárdez collaborates as an art critic in the cultural section Faro da Cultura of the newspaper Faro de Vigo.

GENERAL INFORMATION / PARALLEL ACTIVITIES

Bibliographical Exhibition / Documentation

Manuel Colmeiro

Beginning after the opening of the exhibition, the Library-Documentation Center at MARCO presents a **selection of catalogues and publications** related to the artist and the Renovation Movement of Galician Art. The **documentary dossier**, which brings together links to articles, audios, videos, and other information, will be available here or on the website www.marcovigo.com at [Library/News](#) and [Exhibitions/Present](#).

Information & guided tours

The exhibition staff is available for any questions or information, as well as regular guided tours:

Daily at 6pm

'A la carte' group tours, please call +34 986 113904 / 113900 to book

Learning Activities

For groups of Pre-School, Primary, Secondary, High School and others.

With the support of: Obra Social "la Caixa

From 30 January 2020

Place: exhibition halls and Laboratorio das Artes (1st floor)

Hours: Tuesday to Friday from 11am to 1:30pm / For booking please call +34 986 113900/113904

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