

Exhibition: **Equipo Crónica in the IVAM Collection**
10 July – 9 September 2007

Organized by: IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
Curator: Facundo Tomás

The exhibition, produced by the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern IVAM, features 86 works and includes 16 paintings, dated between 1966 and 1980, which belong to some of Equipo Crónica's best-known series. There are also works on paper – silkscreen prints, collages and linocuts – and 19 drawings, together with 2 sculpture multiples to complete the show. All the works belong to the IVAM Collection, which has one of the most wide-ranging representations of Equipo Crónica, a hundred works, comprising paintings, sculptures and works on paper and other supports. The catalogue published to accompany the exhibition contains illustrations of the works and includes texts by Barbara Rose, Michèle Dalmace, Sofía Barrón, Isabel Justo and the curator of the exhibition, Facundo Tomás.

During their involvement in the Estampa Popular movement, defined by its adherence to the aesthetics of realism and social criticism, Juan Antonio Toledo, Rafael Solbes and Manolo Valdés decided to form Equipo Crónica and work together. In 1965 the three of them took part in the sixteenth *Salon de la Jeune Peinture* in Paris under the name of Equipo Crónica. Although the work that they presented had been produced individually, the spirit of working together as a team proceeding from the same aesthetic assumptions was already thoroughly established. Juan Antonio Toledo left the group not long afterwards. The two remaining members of the group, Rafael Solbes (1940–1981) and Manuel Valdés (1942) continued until 1981, when the death of Rafael Solbes led to the ending of Equipo Crónica and the beginning of Manolo Valdés's career as a solo artist.

Stylistically, Valdés and Solbes belonged to the international movement which rejected the poetics of Informalism and Abstract Expressionism

and introduced a framework of “realism” and “pictorial asepsis”, using the “linguistic” elements of the mass media to create their own poetics, their own “pictorial form”. As the curator of the exhibition says: *From a formal viewpoint, they derived their artistic resources from the mass media and formed part of the broad international movement of Pop Art. But they did not restrict themselves to creating a sort of Spanish branch of Pop Art; they affirmed their personality by a way of working that distinguished them from others.*

Equipo Crónica adopted a figurative style conceived with a critical attitude characteristic of reportage or a chronicle of social and political reality. They interpreted objects not as aesthetic forms but as elements immersed in a social, cultural or historical whole, possessing a meaning, significance or value representative of that reality.

In common with other Pop Art styles, Equipo Crónica was, on an aesthetic level, a reaction against the lyricism and personal expression of the various Informal styles that dominated the immediate post-war period on both sides of the Atlantic. In other respects, however, the group differed considerably, in its intentions and goals as well as its sources and antecedents, from other manifestations of Pop Art in the US, England, France, Italy and the Scandinavian countries. For in addition to the customary devices of that movement – flat colour fields, the use of images from the media or from other visual deposits of mass culture (posters, films, photographs, comics) – they drew on the history of painting and the twentieth-century avant-garde to develop their visual language. In their works there are references to artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Edward Hopper, Fernand Léger, Giorgio de Chirico, José Gutiérrez Solana, Georg Grosz, Yves Tanguy, Valerio Adami, Wassily Kandinsky and Max Ernst, among others.

Equipo Crónica connected up with the basic assumptions of modern painting, analysing it into its classical iconic components, which were established as collective memory, and combining them with images from the mass media. They coincided with other Pop Art styles in their reaction against Informal styles and lyricism, but their intentions and goals were different. Their program was overtly political, for many of their works criticized Spanish politics and questioned art history in a style that sometimes became self-referential. By drawing on the sources of their roots and on appropriations, Equipo Crónica coupled antagonistic referents: popular and cultured, reality and fiction. They adopted dual systems, such as constant features and variations, combining them to form a visual and conceptual homogeneity in which their uninhibited inventions display a relaxed ambiguity and irony.

They took the visual narrative pretext as a basis for posing all the essential problems of art, from merely technical aspects to the most transcendental considerations: raising questions about perspective, *trompe l'œil* and conventional postures, revealing the means used to attain effects or link items together, unifying the dimensions of items from different origins, figures and landscapes, figures and text, and balancing colour.

One of the most important exhibitions that featured works by Equipo Crónica was *Mythologies quotidiennes*, organized in Paris in 1964 by Gérard Gassiot-Talabot, which consolidated the importance of popular imagery on the continent. Other shows organized in Paris in which Equipo Crónica took part were *La figuration narrative dans l'art contemporain* (1965) and *Le monde en question* (1967). In Germany they were represented by the important *Kunst und Politik* exhibition (Karlsruhe, Wuppertal, Cologne) in 1970.