

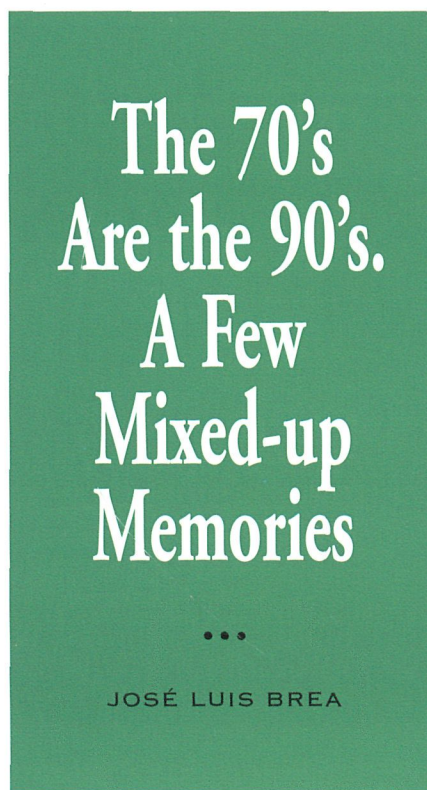
## REVIEWS

I remember the gas that used to bring tears to our eyes. The unison cries of Amnesty, liberty. The continuous stampede of sudden shots. The agitation, the calculus of movement. The fear of side-streets.

I also have a fuzzy recollection of a crazed lecture given by Panero in Galería Buades. The thought police, or something like that. There is no greater censorship than that which one can be induced to exercise over oneself. The more one knows what one is doing, the less one knows. Afterward, in the *tapas bar* next door, a young girl with all the force of The New slipped her hand into a leather glove before flattening his nose.

I remember another day's sudden rainstorm on Castellana Street. We all ran and tried to keep dry under a single awning. I know that Bonet and Guillermito were there. Certainly the gang from Café Central too. Quejido, and probably the Radio Futura bunch. Of course, Paloma Chamorro and Rivas. A lightning bolt should have struck us and a new Frankenstein would have been born. "Zenith" was spelled out in white letters on the sky blue awning. And ever since, everything has marched steadily toward twilight and darkness.

Old Franco had definitively died, the nation was filled with progressives, and we, on the other hand, were followers of Deleuze, i.e., rhizomatics. We supped on omelettes of fine herbs in

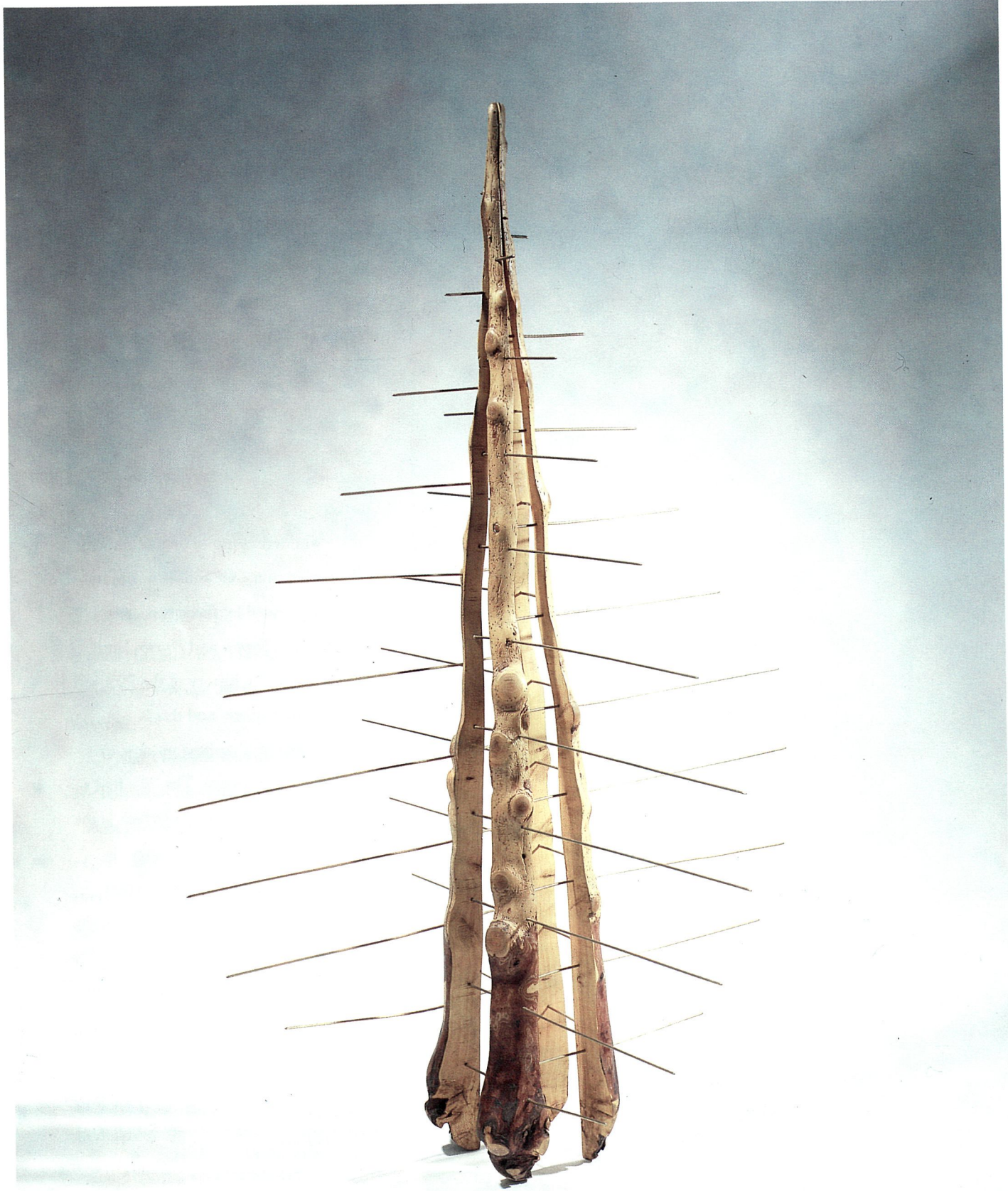


Juanita's greasy spoon and later we went off to listen to The Pegamoides in concert. One day, 1980 rolled around and we barely noticed. That same day I cut my hair (by 20 centimetres), donned a Brian Ferry-style leather jacket and I met my first, perfect woman. Perhaps I should – or could – say something about art and about the exhibition. Forgive me. I'm trying.

Armando Montesinos and I published the first – pardon the awkward expression – fanzine that dealt not only with music but with art. It was called *hojo!*, and, as might be expected, was a crass, photocopied little pamphlet that we sent by mail to 32 friends. Micro-communication, we used to call it, strategies for micro-

communications. One day we coaxed the 32 involuntary (although non-paying) subscribers to come to the Hortaleza neighborhood and wind their way through an industrial warehouse, on the facade of which the Pompidou's transverse plans were reproduced. Rivas's thesis was that a good painting was one that withstood an LSD trip, and that impossible building withstood a wild clandestine party under multi-coloured ceilings. Madrid already had its infrastructure in place. Let's go back to 1980. We wrote something in *hojo!* that displeased the curators. Something about the exhibition being more a termination than an inauguration, that it said more about what had already happened during the 70's than about what was going to happen in the 80's. I think they were a bit angry with us, but they didn't hold it against us. In reality, they didn't even believe it.

They began to believe it when Bonito Oliva came around pitching the notion of the *Transvanguardia*. They showed him their theory about the 80's and assured him that it was the same thing; but Bonito said no, that what they were talking about was Surrealist Pop and had nothing to do with the heavy-hitting international *Transvanguardia*. They had to look for something with a bit more *genius loci*, something more sinister, more along the lines of Solano and Goya, something darker, Barceló. As



Adolfo Schlosser.



Cándido Camacho.

Juan Muñoz, the biker boy, said: when they wanted to bring themselves up to date, they went too far and jumped ahead of themselves.

For a short while. The generation gap is the generation gap, and he who sprints soon comes to a halt. Perhaps the reason that Muñoz has been making such a show of being angry with Bonet (and to think that it is his turn now simply because it is his turn!) is that things are falling back into place. But I

would rather not go into all that here; it's too far removed from those immemorial times. It might seem (although incorrectly) that what we were discussing were the present. The thought police are on patrol and anyone can have a show today as well as receive a punch in the nose.

So, my memories are merely memories – fictions, memories of a period not in fact experienced as far as the 70's are concerned. Or experienced

in the excessively-slow stretching of a precocious adolescent, who mixes everything up. At times I have believed that I was there in May '68, that I was there when the Beatles broke up and that I heard some of Zaj's suspended concerts. But it is not so. Nor – not even – Schlosser in Buades. I think I recall (although I am not certain) that I heard some lecture by Patricio Bulnes and I know that I owned my own copy of the magazine *Trama* shortly after its publication. It is also certain that by that time I had read a good deal of Deleuze, and that I was fascinated by the only issue of *Humo*. The history of the 70's in Spain – the art history of the 70's – will only begin to be written with rigour when someone is able to situate the hinge formed by those two publications, *Trama* and *Humo*. Until that happens, the history of the 70's will continue incomplete, and this is precisely why it is rushing up now to expropriate this decade. The 70's had a right to exist. The bad part (which is the dreadful thing about this country) is that they come along to exercise that right now, 20 years later. As a result, the 90's themselves are being shirked: do you think that the 90's are really being lived in our country? Do you think that in the discussions of the contemporary art scene there is anything that in fact pertains exclusively to the 90's, to our own era? Don't fool yourselves. We don't live in real time, not here, not yet. We are still in re-broadcasts, friends, lagging behind by about 20 years. So it



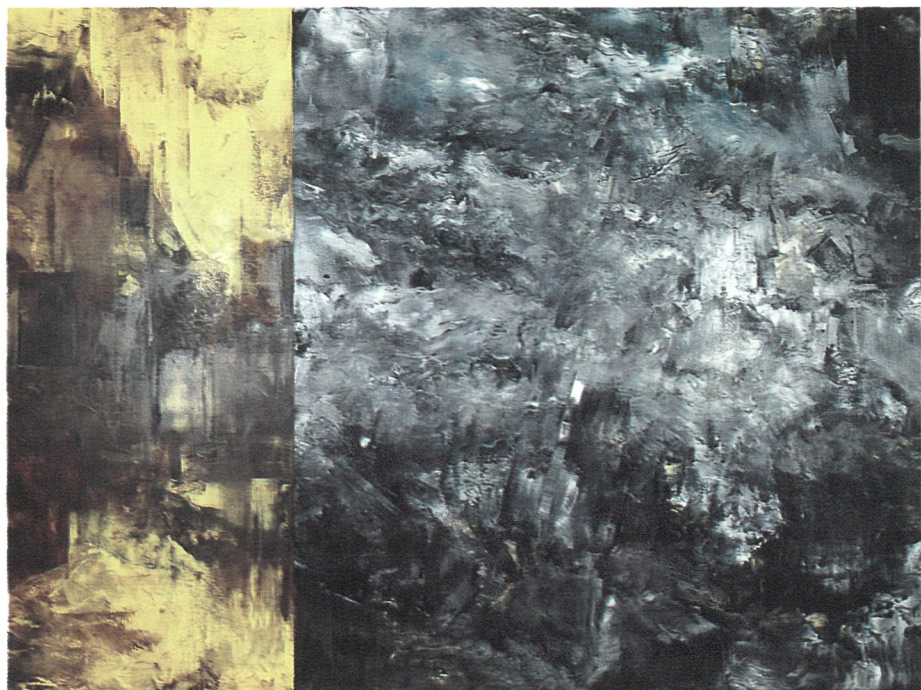
E. Valcárcel.

is good (because it is inevitable) to remember: our age continues to be held hostage.

And I confess that my memories are borrowed memories, fictitious, “mixing memory and desire”. I never experienced the 70’s directly. And everything that I have been able to say about them was written, consciously and explicitly, in the annals of “criticism-fiction”: a mere potential hypothesis, not an interpretation with pretensions toward the truth. I have always tried to propose programmes; I have never tried to diagnose.

Thus my proposition that the end of the 70’s was an important moment for Spanish art was somewhat rash. The real goal was that the period might be

reworked and reviewed in retrospect, as if it really had been an important



Gonzalo González.

moment. A consideration of the art that was emerging in the early 80’s (and primarily in Madrid) as “transconceptual” was based on this hypothesis-programme (1). If it was possible to accept the end of the 70’s as an important moment for the high-strung meeting of three lines of investigation – light-weight Conceptual art (*more conceptesque than conceptual*, Zaj or Muntadas before the Grup de Treball); Minimalism (which developed bilaterally between the rigorous abstraction of *Trama* and a few from the post-Greenberg school on one side, and the Buades-Bustarviejo group of sculptors on the other); and Pop (especially those making free use of post-Gordillismo) – then it might be reasonable to conclude that Spain would be able to develop a moment of consistent creation precisely because of



García Sevilla.

programmatic; once more, it insisted that the end of the decade in question was an important moment, during which a second important moment (here I referred to the Neo-Conceptualism of the late 80's) might be able to consolidate itself as such if it also applied for usufruct of the same legacy, the same transmission of discovery. What I postulated as Neo-Conceptualism (primarily based in Andalucía, among Espalú and some of the artists in his circle, and in the solid work of Muñoz and Iglesias) would again appear to us as an important moment if it were able to recognise its theoretical precursors: abstract, since they are obviously not real – none of those young artists had real and direct contact with Ferrán's conceptual work, nor with Baldeweg's minimalist work, and not even with Gordillo's more economical Pop and automatic work, despite the fact that each had been featured in monographic editions of the magazine *Figura*. Here again, the hypothesis crashed, but this time with greater treachery all around, revealing that there had been a dangerous proposal-fiction involving too many interests. For the officialist version of the moment, which contemptuously ignored the intermediate time between what were considered the genuine "important moments" (the celebrated time of enthusiasm, exalted by officialism). Those who had come before and who (thanks to the proposal) had witnessed the beginnings of their

its usufruct right to its native legacy. In this area – Transconceptual – we would see a fertile breeding ground unfold – for which I even proposed a short list of leading figures: Quejido, Ferrán and Baldeweg. In the field of painting, but taking advantage of a dense and solid set of discoveries, inherited from a tradition of their own. What is clear is that experimentation never interested anyone too much, and ended up as just a mere failed hypothesis of criticism-fiction. The gaze of those who began to consolidate their work in the early 80's soon repudiated the innovations of their

alleged immediate precursors, but they quickly let themselves be seduced by and drawn toward other images and innovations (which were surely one and the same, but with different features) that came from beyond Spain's borders.

The second time I proposed a hypothesis concerning the 70's (2), I repeated the same overall scheme but extended the arc of genealogical audacity beyond natural time periods: if no one had wanted to recognise their parents, perhaps someone would accept grandparents. The hypothesis, again, was less interpretive than

rescue into a living present – Miura, Schlosser and Zaj, for example – found themselves mixed together with the rabble that, at best, looked on them with condescension and with which in some ways they could be identified. And those who came later believed themselves launched into stardom of infinite international success, and preferred to believe that the only artists to whom their work was indebted were named Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Jan Verduyck and Jeff Koons. But now the time of famine has brought us back to our native soil, and within our nation's narrow borders we have seen something else vanish, leaving nothing in its wake. The isolated work of artists in isolation, but neither movements, nor idioms, nor lines of innovation and almost no memory. Everything floats in a sort of unbound notebook. As usual, what is lacking in Spain is something that might link together and make sense of the work of the artists, something that might protect it from becoming a passing daydream. There are no infrastructures that are able to accomplish this, and the infrastructures that do exist aren't interested. So, we remain dwarves that will never be able to climb up on the shoulders of giants.

From the past, 20 years later, those who once discovered the interesting things of their own discovery continue hitching themselves up to approach our own time and ask for recognition. We can give it to them, since it is clear that they deserve it. But

the question is: what use is it now? What can be learned now? What does it offer to artists in the 90's – and to all of us – that we might be able to use? If there were indeed something, this would be a good moment, with provincialism ascendent and everyone ignoring international trends. At least that other hypothesis might be given credit: that the true artists of the 90's are the artists from the 70's.

There is a rumour that a certain critic is working on this same

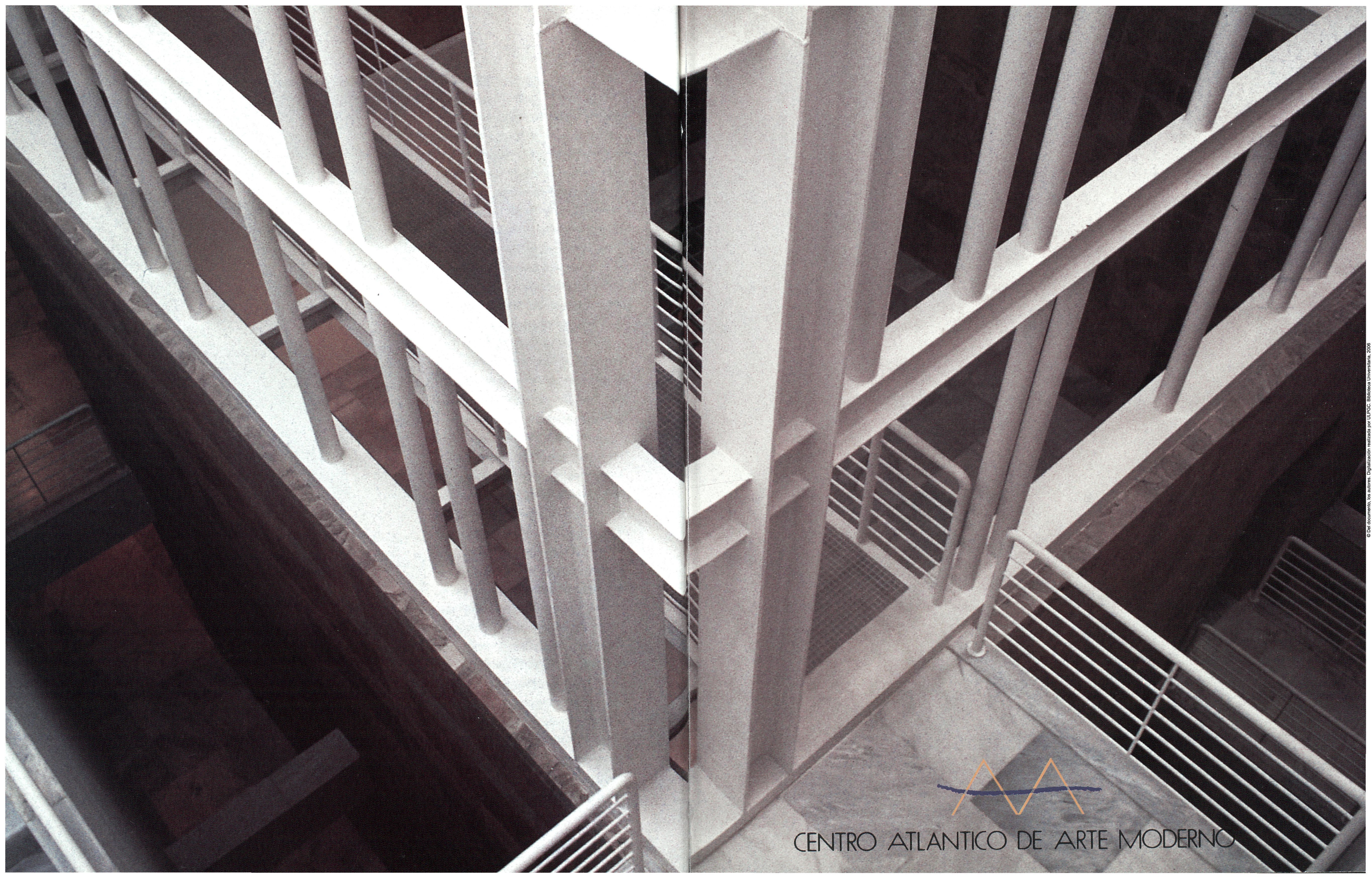
hypothesis, but this time I am not the one: as I once told someone who came earlier, I am only interested in the idiom of painting.

(1) I elaborated on this hypothesis in "Tras el concejor. Escepticismo y Pasión" in *Comercial de la Pintura*, number 2, Logroño, October 1983.

(2) On this occasion in "Por una economía barroca de la representación" and "Los muros de la patria mía". Both texts were included in *Antes y después del entusiasmo – arte español 1972 - 1992*. SDU Publishers, The Hague, 1988.



Tony Gallardo.



CENTRO ATLANTICO DE ARTE MODERNO

