



MEADOWS MUSEUM ACQUIRES FOUR EXCEPTIONAL WORKS BY CONTEMPORARY SPANISH ARTISTS IGNASI ABALLÍ, JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ AND MIGUEL ZAPATA

DALLAS (SMU)—September 3, 2024—The Meadows Museum, SMU, announced today the acquisition of four works that continue to build the institution’s collection of contemporary Spanish art—an important and growing part of the museum’s collection as it continues its focus on presenting the best of art from the Iberian Peninsula. Pieces by renowned Spanish artists Ignasi Aballí and José Hernández, along with two by Miguel Zapata, add new facets to the museum’s collection and strengthen its holdings in this area.

Amanda W. Dotseth, Linda P. and William A. Custard Director of the Meadows Museum, said “The works by Ignasi Aballí, José Hernández and Miguel Zapata are particularly significant additions to our collection. The painting by Hernández, with its haunting imagery and masterful manipulation of material, exemplifies his unique figurative style and invites viewers to contemplate the concept of vulnerability. Aballí’s conceptual piece, born of his work representing Spain at the Venice Biennale in 2022, challenges traditional notions of painting and representation, making it a thought-provoking complement to our existing contemporary Spanish art holdings, and continues to build our relationship with this artist whose work we first showed in 2022. And the two multimedia works by Zapata are cornerstone pieces to understanding both his style and his unique use of materials and almost sculptural sensibility. These acquisitions reaffirm our commitment to showcasing the richness and diversity of Spanish art from the present as well as the past.”

Ignasi Aballí (b. 1958) is known for his conceptually oriented, multidisciplinary approach that spans language-based pieces, sculptures, paintings, photographs, and videos. He was the first artist selected to participate in the *Meadows/ARCO Artist Spotlight (MAS)* program at the Meadows Museum in 2022. Throughout his career, Aballí has continually pushed the boundaries of various formats and materials, exploring themes such as obsolescence, absence, and the tension between fragments and the whole.



Aballí’s *Inventario* (2023), a work consisting of 45 digital prints, exemplifies Aballí’s unique approach to “painting without painting.” Developed as part of his project for the Spanish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022, *Inventario* features close-up photographs of Venetian building façades, magnified and cropped to focus on colors and textures while decontextualizing the architectural elements. While the images resemble minimalist monochrome paintings or Pantone color chips, they also function as a virtual map of Venice, with each photograph glossed by the street name where the depicted building is located. By enlarging and presenting these photographs as a cohesive piece, Aballí highlights the

representational nature of the work, emphasizing his search for ways to bring painterly impulses to the image-making process without relying on traditional painting techniques or materials. This is the first work by Aballí to join the Meadows' collection; it will go on display this fall as part of a special installation of compositions by Spanish artists working in Italy, complementing its fall exhibition *The Legacy of Vesuvius: Bourbon Discoveries on the Bay of Naples*. The Meadows has purchased this work with funds from The Meadows Foundation.



Resurrection Remains (1971–72) demonstrates José Hernández's (1944–2013) signature style, which juxtaposes surreal, grotesque figures with decaying architectural elements. In this haunting oil painting, an amorphous, monstrous protagonist is enveloped by crumbling walls: on one side, peeling wallpaper exposes its fleshy form pressed against stone blocks; on the other, deteriorating stucco sets off a gnarled, bat-like appendage. The inclusion of an object resembling a papal tiara alludes to the memento mori tradition in Spanish art, evoking the transience and vanity of earthly power and splendor. Through his nightmarish imagery, Hernández meditates on the vulnerability of all matter, both organic and constructed, to time itself. Born in Tangier, Morocco, in 1944, José Hernández developed a unique figurative style that stood apart from the prevailing trends of abstraction in 20th-century Spanish art. Drawing inspiration from the realm of dreams, Hernández crafted unsettling scenes—much like this work—that probe the depths of the subconscious. This is the first painting by this artist to be added to the Meadows' collection, and it is an important figurative counterpoint to the many abstract works in the collection by Spanish artists from the same period. *Resurrection Remains* is a gift from Kirk Edward Long.

The two large-scale multimedia pieces by Miguel Zapata (1940–2014) that the Meadows has acquired are untitled works from 2007 and circa 2011. Zapata was born in Cuenca, Spain, and throughout his career drew inspiration from the rich cultural heritage of his hometown. During an era when many Spanish artists were rejecting or redefining their cultural heritage, Zapata chose instead to reinterpret Spanish history in his unique artistic language. He frequently employed traditional subjects such as portraiture, equestrian scenes, and architecture, transforming these compositions through his choice of materials—elements like wood, polymer, burlap, and Styrofoam—and the inclusion of inscriptions or stencils. Following an exhibition of his work at the Meadows in 1986, he decided to make Dallas his second home and for the remainder of his life lived between Madrid and Dallas.



In the first of the two works, *Untitled (Bullfighter on Horseback)* (2007), Zapata pays homage to Spanish bullfighting with three figures on horseback representing integral elements of the tradition. The central figure, a rejoneador, is highlighted, while the two flanking picadors are silhouetted, their horses protected by traditional armor. The phrase “6 TOROS 6” is inscribed in the bottom left corner of the painting, just below the central horse’s flank. This reference to the contemporary Spanish bullfighting magazine *6 Toros 6: Revista de actualidad taurine* connects Zapata’s own history of equestrian portraiture with another important pillar of Spanish culture: bullfighting.



The second work, also *Untitled (Religious Procession)* and likely begun in 1973 and completed in 2011, draws inspiration from Zapata’s childhood memories of the *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) processions in Cuenca. Against the backdrop of an abstracted church tympanum depicting the “Christ in Majesty” iconography, Zapata renders a dynamic, dense composition of figures carrying crosses and flags, evoking the lively atmosphere of the Holy Week celebrations. The inclusion of the phrase “SPQR” on one of the flags further contextualizes the scene: a reference to the ancient Roman civil authority

that sentenced Jesus to death, the text bridges the gap between antiquity and modernity in Zapata’s distinctive style. Both works are a gift from John L. Zogg, Jr.

About the Meadows Museum

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on studying and presenting the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings and funds to start a museum at Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows’s vision to create “a small Prado for Texas.” Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters.

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