

PUNCTUM

Primavera Fotogràfica, 1982-2004

A look at the 12 editions of the festival
through its documentary legacy

Modern Art Room 63 of the MNAC
From 15 May to 30 June 2024



Punctum: detail of a photograph that we notice
by chance and which pierces our heart.

Roland Barthes. *La chambre claire*, 1980

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Primavera Fotogràfica, 1982-2004

The Primavera Fotogràfica was a biennial festival, the initiative of a group of photographers, galleries and cultural centres in Barcelona to promote photography as a means of expression. It was the first step to achieving a cultural normalization of photography. From the mid 1970s to the early 1980s interest in photography grew and some specialist galleries were created in Barcelona. A young generation of photographers saw the opportunity to make a case for photography beyond photo-journalism and to tackle the problems in the sector which had not been present in the Congress of Catalan Culture in 1977.

Its model was the *Venezia-La fotografia festival* (1979) and the *Mois de la Photo à Paris* (1980). Were created the Catalan Photography Symposia (1980) and their conclusions paved the way for this festival. It defended the promotion and publicising of creative photography and the study of photography from a historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic perspective, the renewal of pedagogy and the role of photography in society.

The possibility of exhibiting the collection of Sam Wagstaff at the Joan Miró Foundation in the context of the first edition gave the festival an international feel right from the start, which expanded all over Catalonia. It was necessary for those actions to be nurtured by a cultural institution, and the Generalitat's Department of Culture led the way with the support of the Head of the Cinematography Service, Miquel Porter Moix, in the first edition focused on Barcelona, and shortly afterwards the Plastic Arts Service took charge of for it, expanding all over Catalonia.

Renowned artists and designers have left their mark on the hand programme, the general catalogue of each edition and the logo. Every catalogue reflects the richness of the country's photographic proposals and the involvement of all kinds of public and private bodies. In 1988, David Balsells became the festival's director. The Photographic Book Prize and the Photographic Forum, which made exchanges between creators, experts, gallerists and collectors possible, were created, and the festival became international. The Centre d'Art Santa Mònica was the epicentre of the festival's main exhibition and the place where it was coordinated. The festival gradually achieved its objectives of promoting and publicising photography, marking its evolution as a medium towards the world of the image. In 1994 the first photographs were purchased for the Generalitat's Art Collection, and in 1996 the *Llibre Blanc del Patrimoni Fotogràfic (Photographic Heritage White Paper)* was published, the basis for the formation of the MNAC's Photography Department, under the direction of Eduard Carbonell, which received the material purchased. The Primavera Fotogràfica was the main axis of creative photography in Catalonia and, at the same time, it shaped the institutional policy of the country's photographic culture for two decades.

Forty-two years have gone by since it was created and twenty since it disappeared, but its documentary legacy is immense and it was necessary to exhibit it due to the very successful participation that it achieved from public institutions, private bodies, galleries and art schools all over Catalonia throughout its twelve editions. All of the documents exhibited belong to the library and archive of Josep Rigol, whom we thank for his generosity and collaboration.

Pilar Parcerisas
Curator of the exhibition

“At last, there is a position on the specific nature of photography.”

Alexandre Cirici, art critic. *Serra d’Or*, April 1982

“The Primavera Fotogràfica (Photographic Spring), merely by existing, is already a driver for the recovery of our heritage, it guarantees the existence of young Catalan photography, encourages cultural bodies to open their doors to the fixed image, promotes new photographers and remembers or informs about the most famous ones. It is for this reason that we have joined our forces and those of all who have helped to make a new Primavera possible.”

Miquel Porter Moix, Head of the Cinematography Service and

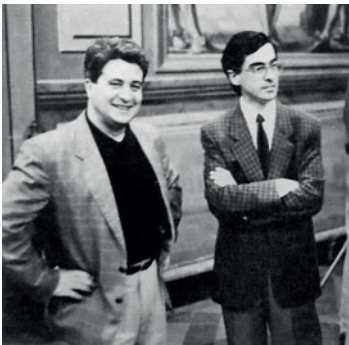
Daniel Giralt-Miracle, Head of the Plastic Arts Service. Primavera Fotogràfica catalogue, 1984

“May the “Primavera” be for photographers what the Fine Arts are for Photography.” [...] “From the recreation of the birth of photography in Catalonia, to the latest trends of the international movement, by way of tribute to the masters, the Primavera Fotogràfica in Catalonia takes positions due to the situation of the medium, which is growing and at the same time in need of constant reflective review.”

Josep Miquel Garcia, Plastic Arts Delegate. Primavera Fotogràfica catalogue, 1988

“Throughout its evolution, the Primavera has been a driving force generating activities, but its strength lies in the permanent collaboration with all the participants, in an example of the work of the public institutions and civil society.” [...] “The great puzzle of normalization has gradually been shaped, the main forms have already been achieved: integration in public collections, the photography department in museums, quality teaching, and recently also, timidly but firmly, the participation of private dealers in safeguarding the photographic heritage, which fills a difficult space in this unfinished puzzle.”

David Balsells, Director. Primavera Fotogràfica catalogue, 2002



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1 David Balsells and Josep Miquel Garcia, Plastic Arts Delegate, in the presentation of Balsells as the new director of the Primavera Fotogràfica, at the Palau Moja, 1988.

2 Inauguration of the Sam Wagstaff Collection at the Joan Miró Foundation, 1982. From right to left: Miquel Porter Moix, Rosa Maria Malet, Cristina Zelich, Sam Wagstaff, Sabine Dufrenoy and Josep Rigol.

“Today the framework of legitimization of photography is different. It is no longer the medium, with its formal characteristics, that imbues the technique with character and singularity. Innovation and hard work are from now on to be found among the relationships that are established between images, and also among the connections that the image itself is capable of generating.”

Carles Guerra, Director. Primavera Fotogràfica hand programme, 2004

“During a dinner in the Can Batista restaurant, in the Barcelona district of Gràcia, a group featuring Cristina Zelich, Josep Rigol, Ferran Freixa, Lluís Casals, Lluís Bover, Eduard Olivella and I myself spontaneously founded what was to become the first Spanish photography festival. Inexperienced in matters of organization, we proposed the coordination of the idea to a French cultural manager living in Barcelona called Sabine Dufrenoy.” [...] “I remember that in one of the group’s brainstorming sessions I suggested the name Primavera Fotogràfica, but it was met with general reluctance; Sabine later retrieved it and defended it until it was accepted unanimously and inscribed in our current collective heritage.”

Joan Fontcuberta, photographer, critic and historian of photography.
Historias de la fotografía española. Escritos 1977-2004. Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 2008

“The Catalan Photography Symposia, organized at the Miró Foundation in 1980, were the seeds of the Primavera Fotogràfica, which became the main axis of creative photography in Catalonia.”

Cristina Zelich, photographic historian. Nadala of the Fundació Carulla, 2012

“The Primavera Fotogràfica is “Le bouquet photographique du printemps catalan.” [...] “I am sorry that, since the abolition of the Primavera Fotogràfica, so few photography exhibitions have been proposed to the public (it seems that even the private galleries have been demotivated), and that the majority of the work of photographers born in the 1980s are almost inaccessible.”

Pierre Borhan. He was the director of the Mission du Patrimoine Photographique of France.
Nadala of the Fundació Carulla, 2012



Photographers included in the Photography Collection of the Generalitat’s Art Collection. Sitting on the floor, from left to right: Mariano Zuzunaga, Jordi Guillumet, Eduard Olivella, Carles Fontserè, Manuel Serra, Ferran Freixa, America Sanchez, David Escudero and Martín García. Standing in the second row, from left to right: Oriol Maspons, Colita, Joan Colom, Francesc Català-Roca, Ricardo Guixà, Aleydis Rispa, Ricard Terré, Xavier Miserachs, Pere Formiguera, Antonio Blanco, Humberto Rivas and Manel Úbeda, Barcelona, 1996. Photo: David Balsells.

ROUND TABLES

Round tables dedicated to four promoters of the Primavera Fotogràfica with experts who were closely associated with them.

Monday 3 June

HUMBERTO RIVAS (Buenos Aires, 1937-Barcelona, 2009)

Marta Gili. Curator and art critic. Head of the Photography and Visual Arts Department of Fundació "la Caixa" (1991-2006), Director of the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (2006-2018) and of the École Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie d'Arles (2019-2023)

Mariona Fernández. Coordinator of the Primavera Fotogràfica (1988-2000) and director of the SCAN Tarragona Festival, 2008 and 2009. Creator and director of Talleres islados on Menorca since 2010

FERRAN FREIXA (Barcelona, 1950-Sant Vicenç de Montalt, 2021)

Cristina Zelich. Photographer, exhibitions curator and photographic historian. Director of the Fotomania gallery (1977-1983) and associated with the beginnings of the Primavera Fotogràfica. Coordinator of the Centro de Fotografía de la Universidad de Salamanca (1996-2001)

Manolo Laguillo. Photographer and photography exhibitions curator. Professor of Photography in the Faculty of Fine Arts of the UB since 1995. Member of the Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts de Barcelona

Tuesday 11 June

TONI CATANY (Llucmajor, Mallorca, 1942-Barcelona, 2013)

Antoni Garau. Director of the Toni Catany Foundation. International Photography Centre, Llucmajor, Mallorca

Pepe Font de Mora. Director of the Foto Colectania Foundation. Founder and director of the Railowsky Foto-gallery, Valencia (1985-2001)

EDUARD OLIVELLA (Barcelona, 1948-2019)

Juan Naranjo. Photographic historian and exhibitions curator. Director of the Juan Naranjo Art and Documents Gallery, Barcelona

Pilar Parcerisas. Art critic and independent exhibitions curator. President of the Catalan Art Critics' Association (2007-2010) and member of the Nacional Council of Arts and Culture (2009-2019)

Moderate: Pilar Parcerisas

At 6 p.m., in the Dome Room of the MNAC

Primavera Fotogràfica, 1982-2004

Institutional heads of the Generalitat de Catalunya

Miquel Porter Moix, Head of the Cinematography Service

Daniel Giralt-Miracle, Head of the Plastic Arts Service

Josep Miquel Garcia, Plastic Arts Delegate

Josep Parera i Serramià, Plastic Arts Delegate

Organisation of the festival

1982-1984-1986: Organising committees

1988-2002: David Balsells, Director

2004: Carles Guerra, Director