

**Exhibition** March 21–June 6, 2025  
Nouvel Building, Library and Documentation Centre, Space D

# Rhythms

## Images of Feminine Labor



"La expresiva maravilla de Berta Singerman" [The expressive wonder of Berta Singerman], *Estampa* 1, no. 7 (February 14, 1928).  
Photographs: Zapata

“Typists and dressmakers, clothes pressers or models, seamstresses, mothers, shop assistants, embroiderers, shirtmakers, office clerks, bookkeepers, laborers, and draftswomen.”<sup>1</sup>

Starting in the mid-1920s, the corps of women workers was frequently shown in the Spanish graphic press. Alone or in groups, in factories, houses, fields, offices, or city streets, drawn or painted, they appear on anti-fascist posters, revolutionary graphic art, and the propaganda of the Women’s Section of the Falange. Compositionally and conceptually, these images make up a documentary encyclopedia of the actions, techniques, and tools that shaped a new type of feminine subjectivization on the basis of performative repetition. The technological advances of modernity are represented through feminine bodies connected to machines: hands that type or plug in cables, feet that press pedals. Also shown is the class bias running through the professionalization of these women, who participated in the labor market in various ways.

During the Spanish Civil War, many images revealed a renegotiation of gender roles, resulting in greater public and collective visibility for women and also affecting representations of maternity and reproduction. Although the Francoist labor law of 1938 stated that women should remain outside “the workshop and the factory,” their work was in fact indispensable for everyday survival in the postwar period because so many men had been killed, imprisoned, or exiled.<sup>2</sup> This essential role is clear even in the visual culture most closely aligned with Falangist propaganda, then preponderant.

The exhibition *Rhythms: Images of Feminine Labor* uses a selection of materials to explore the changes and continuities that working brought to the feminine identity before, during, and after the Civil War. This time frame is not tied to the classic division

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<sup>1</sup> *Estampa*, no. 235 (July 9, 1932).

<sup>2</sup> *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 505 (March 10, 1938): 6, 179.



El trabajo como deber social será exigido inexcusablemente,  
en cualquiera de sus formas, a todos los españoles no impe-  
didos, estimándolo tributo obligado al patrimonio nacional.  
EL CAUDILLO.

Sección Femenina de Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las J.O.N.S. [Women's Section of the Spanish Falange], *Agenda para el año 1941 para las cuatro estaciones: Nieve, flor, espiga y racimo* [Diary for the year 1941 for the four seasons: Snow, flower, ear of corn, and bunch of grapes] (1941)



"Alfonsa sewing a pair of pants belonging to her husband, Ernesto Parrado. She is the one who takes care of the clothes of all the comrades in the advance guard." *Crónica*, no. 359 (September 27, 1936). Photograph: Félix Albero and Francisco Segovia

between Republic, war, and early Francoism but responds instead to an awareness of the friction between past and present when a specific object of study is approached and how this frequently leads to anachronisms and leaps in time. This exhibition is therefore situated and nonconclusive; it presents the images with various intuitions and partial evidence that open paths for perception and therefore knowledge. Traces thus emerge of the women researchers' relationship with the images they found in the archives of the Museo Reina Sofía's Library and Documentation Centre: the discoveries, surprises, serendipities, certainties, anachronisms, and doubts. The result is a survey of forms and processes of thought, which are granted a central role in the construction of the knowledge and history being related. The exhibition also includes a previously unseen audiovisual production by Julia Montilla that gives an account of the curators' research.



Margaret Michaels, photoreportage on the Barrio Xino made over five days on commission from GATOPAC. Second day. Carrer de l'Arc del Teatre, no. 4. Interior of a room. 1934. Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona. © Estate of Margaret Michaels

This exhibition—about paper and on paper—presents the curators' investigations in the Library and Documentation Centre, where gestures, rhythms, and repetitions of women's work were embodied by those who handled the documentation. The selection and arrangement of materials reflect their varied physical qualities, emphasizing them as integral to the research rather than simply its medium. Visitors are invited to explore how images of feminine labor shape both individual and collective subjectivity.

Selina Blasco, Maite Garbayo-Maeztu, and María Rosón

**Curators of the exhibition**





Josep Renau, photomontage, *Orto 1*, no. 1 (1932). © Fundació Josep Renau, Valencia

# Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

## Exhibition

### Curators

Selina Blasco  
Maite Garbayo-Maeztu  
María Rosón

### Project Director

Isabel Bordes  
Alberto Medina

### Coordination

Almudena Gómez  
Alberto Medina

### Management

Isabel Bordes

### Restoration

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### Design

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### Translations

Philip Sutton

### Copyediting

Christopher Davey

### Installation

Feltrero División Arte S.L.

### Graphics

Rótulos SAR S.L.

### Lighting

Urbia Services

### Insurance

Poolsegur S.L.

## Library and Documentation Centre, Space D

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### Opening hours

Monday to Friday  
(except public holidays)  
9 am to 9 pm

The room will be cleared  
15 minutes before closing.

### Guided visits

Alternate Wednesdays at  
12:00 h from April 2 onward.  
Free admission until full capacity,  
prior registration by mail to  
[biblioteca@museoreinasofia.es](mailto:biblioteca@museoreinasofia.es).

All images:

Library and Documentation Centre, Space D,  
except where otherwise stated

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Organized by:



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