

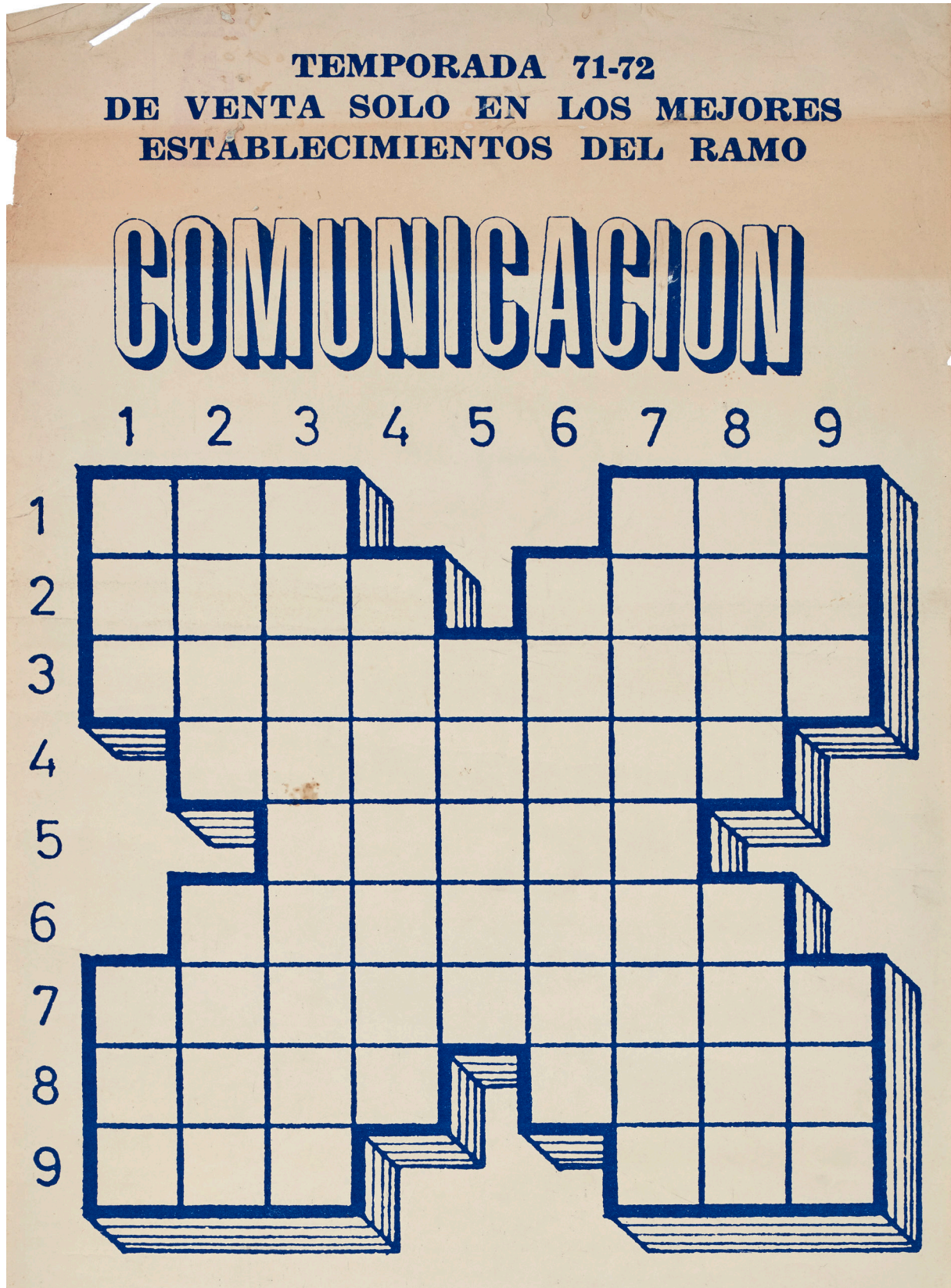
Design, Publish, Liberate

An Approach to the Visual Thought of Alberto Corazón

June 25 – October 15, 2021

Museo Reina Sofía, Nouvel Building, Library and Documentation Centre, Space D

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

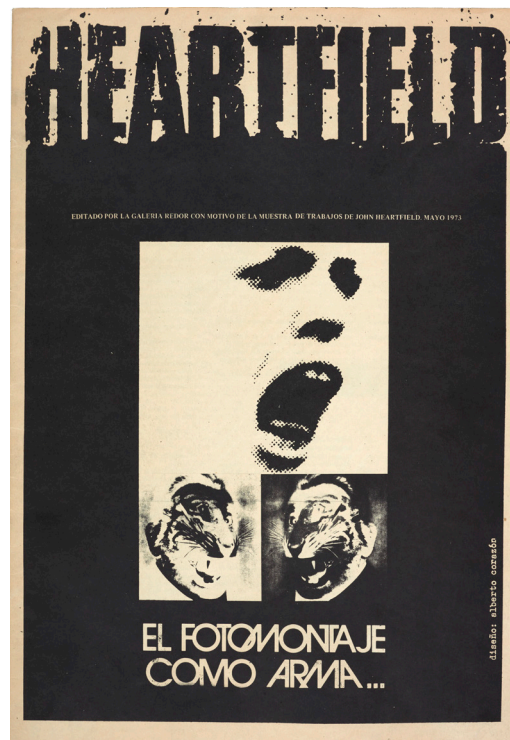


Alberto Corazón, poster for the collection *Comunicación* (Communication), fragment, 1972. © Alberto Corazón, A+V Agencia de Creadores Visuales, 2021

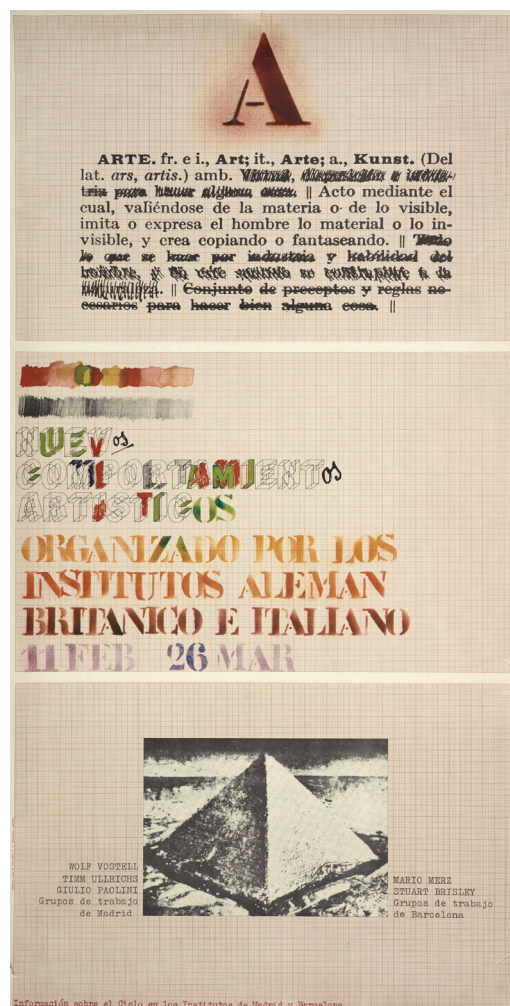
Alberto Corazón (Madrid, 1942-2021) is one of the key figures for an understanding of the processes of theoretical and artistic modernization in Spain during the late Francoist period and the first years of democracy. This was a period dominated by tensions originating in official cultural policy and the advance of currents of critical thought supported by study of the image and the media.

Aimed at demonstrating Alberto Corazón's importance as a theoretical and critical agent while highlighting the avant-garde and multidisciplinary nature of the artist's work in the field of graphic design, this documentary exhibition is an approach to his work between 1966 and 1978 on the basis of the materials preserved in the Marchán/Quevedo Archive, a large collection of items related to the artist compiled by M^a Dolores Quevedo Ibáñez and Simón Marchán Fiz. These include his first silkscreen prints, his posters for various institutions (the German Institutes of Madrid and Barcelona, town halls, and art galleries like Vandrés, Vijande and Buades), his design and publication of catalogues and magazines, and his own conceptual artistic practice, evidencing the value of Corazón's visual production and helping to understand his work in terms of political and critical commitment.

Alberto Corazón's career as a graphic designer began with the foundation of the publishing house Ciencia Nueva (1964). Among other things, this project served to introduce theoretical trends in the social sciences and historiography that were unknown in Spain until then. After the publishing firm was shut down under the accusation of belonging to the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) during the state of emergency declared by Manuel Fraga Iribarne in 1969, and was then forced to close a second time when its license was revoked, the artist created a new publishing venture, Alberto Corazón Editor, in 1972. It was then that he began the collection *Comunicación* (Communication), which became an essential instrument for the reception and diffusion of texts by authors, mainly international, linked to different branches of knowledge like structuralism, linguistics and political economics. These publications influenced the artistic practices of contemporaries as well as teachers and students, who began to familiarize themselves with these tendencies. *Comunicación* catalyzed Marxist critical theory, the artistic and architectural program of the historical avant-gardes (especially Russian and German), and the latest trends in semiology, the cultural industry, and mass society. Alongside Corazón, theorists like Simón Marchán Fiz helped to introduce authors who had not yet been translated into Spanish, like the philosopher Max Bense and the critic Jan Mukařovský. It should also be mentioned that this collection published the first two editions of *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto* (From Objectual Art to Conceptual Art, 1972 and 1974)



Alberto Corazón, John Heartfield. *El fotomontaje como arma...* (John Heartfield. Photomontage as Weapon...), Galería Redor, Madrid, 1973
© Alberto Corazón, A+V Agencia de Creadores Visuales, 2021



Alberto Corazón, poster for the series *Nuevos comportamientos artísticos* (New Artistic Behaviors), 1974
© Alberto Corazón, A+V Agencia de Creadores Visuales, 2021

by Marchán Fiz, whose second edition examines and defines the category of “new artistic behaviors”.

Both technically and theoretically, Corazón was in the vanguard of his time. In 1969, together with the photographer and artist Tino Calabuig (Colmenar de Oreja, 1939), he set up a workshop for experimental screen printing that in December 1973 became the Galería Redor. This gallery, with no links to any official organization or institution, became an experimental center in its own right. One of the lines it pursued was the recovery through artistic practice of the political background of the historical avant-gardes, as exemplified by the pioneering exhibition in Spain, *John Heartfield, El fotomontaje como arma...* (John Heartfield. Photomontage as Weapon..., 1973), whose catalogue was designed and edited by Corazón. The German artist had an immediate influence on him, and he embraced the tradition of Dadaist and Constructivist photomontage in his posters and projects.

Within these parameters, and in addition to his work as a publisher, he carried out crucial work as a graphic designer for the magazines *Comunicación XXI* (1972-1976), *Zona Abierta* (1974-1976) and *Nuestra Bandera* (1977-1979), the theoretical organ of the PCE, so demonstrating the multidisciplinary nature of his work. Another example of the importance of visual grammar in his production is the project *Documentos* (Documents, 1971-1974), a series of artistic publications that included titles like *Leer la imagen* (Reading the Image, 1971), *Una iconografía de clase* (A Class Iconography, 1972) and *Aire, fuego, tierra, agua* (Air, Fire, Earth, Water, 1972). Also among them was *Plaza Mayor, análisis de un espacio* (Plaza Mayor, Analysis of a Space, 1974) – whose immediate precursor was the work *El hombre como señal, el espacio como cultura* (Man as Sign, Space as Culture, 1972) – which was presented in the series *Nuevos comportamientos artísticos* (New Artistic Behaviors, 1974), an international event regarded as a milestone in Spanish conceptualism. Organized by Simón Marchán Fiz, Corazón designed its poster and program.

The narrative potential of the documents presented in this exhibition allows us to reconstruct interpersonal relationships as well as the resistant discursive and visual processes that make Alberto Corazón a key figure in the alternative cultural scene of the last decade of Francoism and the first years of democracy. The proposed itinerary retrieves and emphasizes the multifaceted role played by an artist who helped a large and heterogeneous part of the Spanish artistic scene to find visibility on the international map of the 1970s.

Organized by

The group of students from the Art Theory and Criticism itinerary on the Official MA in Contemporary Art History and Visual Culture, organised jointly by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

Curatorship

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Programme

Documentary Exhibitions, Library and Documentation Centre

Acknowledgments

To Simón Marchán Fiz, for his generosity in providing such an indispensable archive and for sharing his knowledge and experience. To Alberto Medina and the Library's team of experts. To lecturers Juan Albarrán, Alicia Fuentes Vega, David Moriente, Rocío Robles Tardío and Sergio Rubira. And to everyone involved in the initial research process.

Education program developed with the sponsorship of:

