

**The Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, the precursor to today's Museo, opened its doors to the public on 28 May 1986**

## **THE REINA SOFÍA TURNS 40**



Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. View of the Sabatini Building façade. The Museo Reina Sofía's photographic archive. Photograph: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores

- The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía has become a benchmark cultural institution both nationally and internationally, welcoming 1,700,000 visitors a year.
- Today's Museo is a space for new artistic creation, knowledge development and research in the field of Humanities and Social Science, as well as an active witness to society's transformation.

The Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (CARS), the precursor to today's Museo Reina Sofía and located in the former Hospital General de Madrid, first opened its doors to the public on 28 May 1986, after its official unveiling two days previously, setting off on its path as a centre for Spanish and international temporary exhibitions.

Two years later, on **27 May 1988**, it became a national museum: the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS)**. On **31 October 1990** the site of the Museo was **officially opened** by Spain's King and Queen, Carlos I and Sofía, and on **10 September 1992** its **permanent collection** was undraped to the public, with Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* the **bedrock** of the Reina Sofía's **museum discourse**.

The Museo Reina Sofía's main site extends across a surface area of **84,048 m<sup>2</sup>**, made up of the **Sabatini Building**, an eighteenth-century building and former hospital that was declared a Historic-Artistic Monument in 1977, and the **Nouvel Building**, a glass-and-steel annex designed by Jean Nouvel and unveiled in 2005. The Museo's other sites include two galleries in Madrid's Retiro Park: the Palacio de Cristal, currently undergoing restoration work, and the Palacio de Velázquez.

The **Museo Reina Sofía Collections**, with an initial 10,000-strong collection of artworks from the former Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo (MEAC), **comprises 31,289 pieces today**. Over this period, the Collections have progressively expanded via **major purchases, donations and loans** and a wider array of formats, encompassing film, video, live arts and performance, with the **stress also placed on the incorporation of women artists**, who currently account for 15% of their holdings, and **Latin American art**.

The Collections are currently undergoing a process of revision and will be presented in three stages, with the first, *Collection. Contemporary Art: 1975–Present*, inaugurated on 16 February 2026 on Floor 4 of the Sabatini Building. The second part will be presented in 2027 on Floor 3, with works from the period stretching from the 1950s to the 1970s, and the rehang will culminate in 2028 with the third stage on Floor 2, a rearrangement devoted to avant-garde movements.

Following the founding of the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía by Spain's minister of Culture Javier Solana, via an initiative by Carmen Giménez, then director of the Centro Nacional de Exposiciones, the Museo has been managed since its establishment by seven people: **Tomás Llorens** (1988–90), **María de Corral** (1991–94), **José Guirao** (1994–2001), **Juan Manuel Bonet** (2001–2004), **Ana Martínez de Aguilar** (2004–07), **Manuel Borja-Villel** (2008–23) and the current director **Manuel Segade** (2023).

The Reina's Collections are made up of artists such as Francis Bacon, María Blanchard, Alexander Calder, Salvador Dalí, Sonia Delaunay, Pepe Espaliú, Juan Gris, José Gutiérrez Solana, Maruja Mallo, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Juan Muñoz, Pablo Picasso, Ángeles Santos, Richard Serra, Dorothea Tanning, Antoni Tàpies, Gerda Taro, Delhy Tejero and Rosario de Velasco, among numerous others.

Moreover, the Museo is supported by the **Museo Reina Sofía Foundation**, since 2012, and its US namesake, and the **Friends of the Reina Sofía Foundation**, since 2019, while the **Cáder Institute of Central American Art** was created in 2025 to foster research and the dissemination of art from this region and its diasporas.

### **More than 650 Temporary Exhibitions**

Since its unveiling in 1986, the Museo Reina Sofía has cemented an ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions which are international in scope and established to accommodate the most innovative expressions of contemporary art. Thus, from the outset it has held exhibitions regarded as landmarks in Spanish art history, for instance the emblematic inaugural shows of the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía: *Referencias: un encuentro artístico en el tiempo* (References: An Artistic Encounter in Time) and *Procesos: cultura y nuevas tecnologías* (Processes: Culture and New Technology), both in 1986, in addition to *La imagen sublime* (The Sublime Image, 1987), *Arte Minimal de la Colección Panza* (Minimal Art from the Panza Collection, 1988) and *Muntadas. Híbridos* (Muntadas. Hybrids, 1988).

Through more than 650 exhibitions organised across four decades, the institution has developed a steady stream of activities which have attracted thousands of visitors, for instance **Salvador Dalí** shows in 2013, with 730,000 visitors, and **Picasso. Pity and Terror. Picasso's Path to Guernica**, in 2017, seen by 681,127 people.

The Museo has alternated solo shows by pre-eminent artists — from María Blanchard, Picasso and Juan Muñoz to international figures like Louise Bourgeois, Joseph Beuys and Richard Hamilton — with group thesis shows. The latter of these have been pivotal to configuring the Museo's holdings, as with **Four Directions** in the sphere of photography, or have presaged debates on globalisation, identity and visual culture, for example **Cooked and Raw** and **ATLAS. How to Carry the World on One's Back?**, curated by the distinguished French art historian and essayist Georges Didi-Huberman. Further, the Museo has driven

forward critical revisions of historical contexts via projects that include *Versions from the South*, *The Pamplona Encounters 1972* and *Campo Cerrado*.

Today, under the management of Manuel Segade, the Reina's exhibition programme looks to alloy unprecedented accounts of art history and be mindful of the diversity of contemporary art-making, a strategy that has materialised in shows by artists such as **Maruja Mallo**, **Néstor Martín-Fernandez de la Torre** and the recently opened exhibitions on **Aurèlia Muñoz** and **Felix Gonzalez-Torres**. The Museo has also enhanced its commitment to performance practices and new languages, most notably with interventions by **Laia Estruch** and the programme in Espacio 1 devoted to exhibition-cinema, inaugurated by **Oliver Laxe**.

### **The Present Time**

Manuel Segade's current project (2023–28) seeks an open and approachable museum which creates mechanism of participation, dialogue and discussion. A project which fully places its faith in contemporary art as an element of social transformation.

In addition to the **new presentation of the Collections**, with the unveiling on 16 February 2026 of the first phase, *COLLECTION. CONTEMPORARY ART: 1975–PRESENT*, Manuel Segade's Reina has also implemented initiatives such as *History Doesn't Repeat Itself, But it Does Rhyme*, a new programme which looks to establish a dialogue with Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) and other significant works of art with certain parallels, starting with *Dumile Feni: African Guernica (2026)*. Further enhancements include the Nouvel Building's rooftop terraces as a gallery space with the installation of three kinetic sculptures from the 1960s and 1970s and the very recent installation of avant-garde works from Spain: *Pájaro lunar* (Lunar Bird), by Joan Miró, and Pablo Gargallo's *Gran Profeta* (Great Prophet).

**To request interviews or recordings on this fortieth anniversary, please contact the Museo's Press Department.**

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**For further information**

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