

# PRIX PIERRE DAIX 2023

Paula Barreiro López

*Compagnons de lutte.  
Avant-garde et critique d'art  
en Espagne pendant  
le franquisme*

Bourse  
de Commerce  
**Pinault**  
Collection

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# Prix Pierre Daix 2023

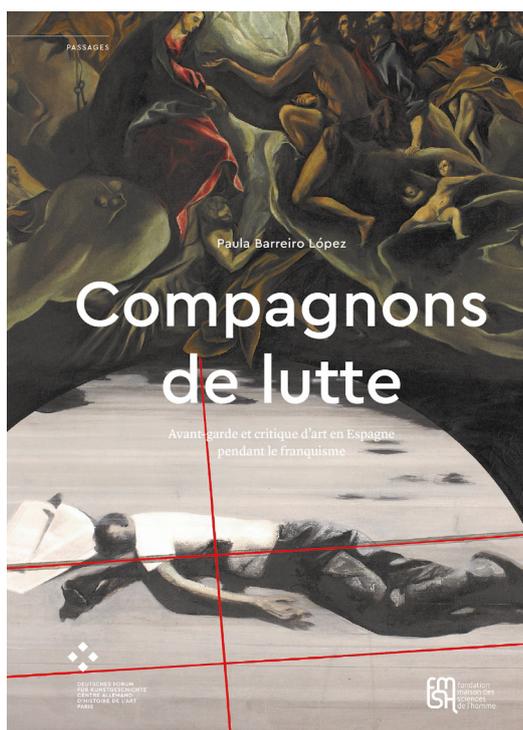
**The Pinault Collection is pleased to announce that the Prix Pierre Daix is awarded this year to Paula Barreiro López for her book *Avant-Garde Art and Criticism in Francoist Spain*, published in French as *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne pendant le franquisme*, by Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme in 2023.**

Created by François Pinault in 2015 in homage to his friend, the writer and art historian Pierre Daix, who died in 2014, the prize is awarded each year to a work on the history of modern or contemporary art.

In this 2023 edition, the members of the jury wish to recognize Paula Barreiro López's remarkable work, which explores a poorly studied subject: Spanish arts and culture during the later period of Franco's reign. The work used unpublished interviews and unexplored archives to examine the relationship between artistic discourse and practice within the socio-political, ethical, and cultural context of Francoist Spain. It emphasises the role of artistic creation as a form of political involvement, and the importance of criticism to this process.

In opening a new chapter in the history of art, *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne* proves a fascinating study that also resonates with Pierre Daix's own intellectual and political commitments.

# The book



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In Spain, during Francoism's later period (1957-1975), art critics played an essential role in the protest movements that had begun to rock a society in the process of complete transformation. In opposition to the regime's doctrine of an independent, de-politicised modern art, these critics produced aesthetic discourses that re-established a connection between culture and politics and pushed artists to view their own works within the larger context of ethical and social issues.

*Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne* used unpublished interviews and unexplored archives to look at the work of seven Spanish art critics and historians who played an active role in their country's intellectual and political life in the 1960s through their publications, editorials, translations, and organisation of exhibitions, debates, and events. Through the close ties they forged with Giulio Carlo Argan and Umberto Eco in Italy, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez in Mexico, and Gérauld Gassiot-Talabot, Julio Le Parc, and the Salon de la Jeune Peinture in Paris, these authors appropriated the theories and artistic trends circulating in Europe and the Americas at that time, successfully adapting them to the specific conditions of Franco's Spain.

The result of an international and interdisciplinary approach to the art networks spanning the Global South, Paula Barreiro López's work opens a chapter that had remained overlooked in European art history, shedding light on the Spanish avantgarde's work in the last years of the dictatorship and its diffusion and critical reception in leftist cultural circles during the Cold War.

The book has been published in French as *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne pendant le franquisme* in 2023 after first appearing in English in 2017 as *Avant-Garde Art and Criticism in Francoist Spain* and in Spanish in 2021 as *Vanguardia y crítica de arte en la España de Franco*.

# Biography of Paula Barreiro López



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Paula Barreiro López is Professor of the History of Contemporary Art at the Université Toulouse-II-Jean-Jaurès and a member of the FRAMESPA research centre (France, Amériques, Espagne—Sociétés, pouvoirs, acteurs). She has worked at several European institutions, including the National Art History Institute (INHA) in Paris, the History Institute of the National Spanish Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid, and the Universities of Barcelona, Liverpool, Geneva, and Grenoble. Through several research initiatives, most notably the creation in 2015 of the international research platform MoDe(s)—Modernité(s) Décentralisée(s), which brings together scholars from across Europe and North and South America who work on “transatlantic art, politics, and counterculture from the Cold War to the contemporary era”, Paula Barreiro López has made key contributions to the globalising history of contemporary art.

Her first two monographs, *Arte normativo español* [*Spanish Normative Art*] (2006) and *La abstracción geométrica en España* [*Geometric Abstraction in Spain*] (2009) looked at the development and internationalisation of geometric abstraction in Spain. Since then, Barreiro López has become interested in the artistic interactions, art criticism, politics, and cultural networks in Europe and Latin America during the Cold War, analysing modernity’s many developments in an already globalised setting. Most recently, she has published the books *Revolver el tiempo* [*Stirring Up Time*] (with María Ruido) in 2023 and *Atlántico frío* [*Cold Atlantic*] in 2019. She has also contributed to the academic journals *Leonardo*, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, and *Critique d’art*.

# Interview with the author

## **What are the major issues that *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne* explores?**

The book highlights how cultural forces collaborated actively during Franco's dictatorship to establish an intellectual, theoretical, moral, democratic, and anti-Francoist consciousness. In its analysis of the intertwining of art and politics in 1950s avant-garde Spain, it looks at the processes of negotiation that critics, artists, and cultural actors engaged in during the later stage of Francoism (1959-1975). The book focuses mainly on this period, but it also considers the 1936 coup d'état and the birth of the dictatorship to illustrate the processes of social transformation, the development of art, and the interactions between Franco's regime and the world of culture. *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne* analyses the work of seven major art critics and historians: Antonio Giménez Pericás, Vicente Aguilera Cerni, José María Moreno Galván, Alexandre Cirici, Tomàs Llorens, Valeriano Bozal, and Simón Marchán. Their work offers a privileged perspective on how the avant-garde operated in the cultural and socio-political spheres. These critics' extensive participation in the major artistic events of the era, their interest in international trends and how they developed in light of emerging transnational theories all played a role in the successful importation and recontextualisation of these theories and trends. This highly dynamic picture allows us to study the interaction between intellectuals and artists, the overlay of political and ideological forces (such as Marxist thought) that underlay a good many decisions, and their role in creating concepts, ideas, values, and positions. The book retraces the network of international connections and exchanges that shaped Spanish art criticism through the sites and actors that gave rise to a culture of protest. It also looks at the role that contemporary aesthetic theories played in the desire to form this avant-garde. And lastly, the book considers the decisive role of criticism as a mediator of new concepts and ideas in the cultural sphere (through exhibitions, publications, etc.) and the effect of these initiatives on the artistic and aesthetic discourse of the time.

## **How did Spanish art criticism play a central role in the formation of the political resistance to Franco?**

In the late 50s, a new aesthetic discourse developed in Spanish art criticism that sought to define the goals of the avant-garde during this later period of Francoism. This entailed understanding art criticism as a cultural criticism with a strong artistic and socio-political commitment. In their appropriation and adaptation of *critica militante* – a method that had been widely debated in Italy – a group of Spanish critics became heavily involved in creating, fostering, and even directing the avant-garde trends that grew exponentially during this historical period. These “militant critics” did more than simply share democratic, anti-Francoist positions and a desire to disrupt the regime's cultural strategies; they saw their work as a form of hands-on action that blurred the lines between art and politics. This conviction impelled them to participate, together with other leftist intellectuals, in dissident, pro-democracy initiatives against the dictatorship, which included public protests, strikes, and penning letters of support against the dictatorship's reprisals, among other actions. They belonged to what at the time were called the “forces of culture” that opposed the dictatorship; some of them were sent to prison for their membership in the underground Communist party. But I believe that it is in their commitment to the spheres of culture and art where they played a central role. Their understanding of art as an active instrument in society and their advocacy of democracy in Spain allowed them to contribute decisively to a change in attitudes that echoed the transformations that Spanish society was undergoing as a whole. The activism of these militant critics within international networks also made their foreign colleagues more aware of what life was like under the dictatorship, thereby morally obliging them to act on their behalf, support the avant-garde, and back the ideological and critical positions that these critics had taken against the dictatorship.

This was the case, for example, of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), which, despite its apolitical status, advocated for an anti-Francoist Spain on many occasions as a result of the intervention of these Spanish critics and the solidarity expressed by their colleagues around the world. Thus, their professional contacts played an important role in nurturing an aesthetic and intellectual dialogue, stimulating an

awareness of the political situation in Spain and its consequences for the cultural sphere. This fostered solidarity worldwide outside Communist networks and spreading an awareness past the country's borders of the repression to which Spaniards were subject. They strove to oppose the regime's efforts at limiting information and fabricating a more positive image of Francoist Spain for the purpose of stimulating international investment and tourism.

### **Between the aesthetic and ideological debates, how was art perceived at the height of Francoism?**

The perception of art at the height of Francoism underwent immense developments and transformations that mirrored the dictatorship's own shifts and contradictions. Francoism had both an extraordinary ability to adapt to the modern world, despite its conservative – or rather, fascist – roots, as well as a rigid attitude towards an increasingly dissatisfied society that was demanding more and more freedoms and civil rights. From the establishment of the Junta de Burgos in 1937, art and culture played an important role in Franco's plan to recreate the Spanish Empire (at least in discursive and visual terms, given the absence of any significant colonial holdings), as it bolstered an imaginary connection to the past and helped spread the regime's conservative ideology. The arts were used to glorify and legitimise the state, all the while remaining completely subordinate to the ideological dictates of this "new empire". The exaltation of traditionalism was a central element of the cultural representations supported by the state, especially during the first decade of the dictatorship. That notwithstanding, the stabilisation of the Francoist regime with the signing of the bilateral agreements between Spain and the United States in 1953 caused this understanding to evolve towards an aestheticising view of the arts (in complete alignment with the aesthetic debates in the Western bloc during the Cold War), which accompanied a policy of international exhibitions of modern art (mainly of Spanish Informalist artists) sponsored by the dictatorship.

### **What major shifts can we see in artistic practices and theoretical discourse under Franco's dictatorship?**

The independent, apolitical, and formalist definition of art, which was deeply rooted in Spanish intellectual and government circles in the 1950s, began to shift within a more contemporary critical discourse. Because of *critica militante*, this understanding gave way to the notion of an essentially collective, politically involved avant-garde that played an active role in social praxis. This period, which was characterised by rapid modernisation, led to reflections on nature and the role of culture in a changing society. In artistic circles, a new debate emerged on the links between art and (leftist) ideology and the role that the avant-garde could and should play in the social sphere. In the 60s and 70s, freedom, democracy, civil rights, regional identities, and social involvement began to make their mark on Spanish culture and its artistic practices. This transformation of the discourse is also tied to another major change that began in the second half of the 1950s, namely the gradual internationalisation of art and criticism, which was in turn closely linked to the reopening of Spain's borders following the regime's international rehabilitation. This also proved a key moment in the establishment of a *critica militante* within Spanish artistic circles. In opposition to the traditional values put forth by the regime, critics and artists sought an escape from the intellectual and cultural isolation imposed by the dictatorship through their contacts to colleagues abroad and the ensuing formation of international networks that gave them a necessary theoretical and aesthetic *aggiornamento* or updating. But this intellectual updating was anything but a simple, passive transposition of theories, ideas, and aesthetic practices. These were instead transformed and adapted to the Spanish context, ultimately yielding a new narrative and new artistic practices inflected by these foreign influences, but not subjected to them. In other words, they were made to fit Spanish requirements and the specific situation of the dictatorship. These transformations are readily visible in the artistic movements during late-stage Francoism, whose major avant-garde groups (Grupo Parpalló, El Paso, Equipo 57, Estampa Popular, Equipo Crónica, Equipo Realidad, and Grup de Treball) and artists (Antoni Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida, Ana Peters, Juan Genovés, Rafael Canogar, Eduardo Arroyo, and Alberto Corazón, among others) are studied in the book. The case of groups and movements close to narrative representation and Pop Art, such as Crónica de la Realidad, Equipo Crónica, and Equipo Realidad, in which militant critics became personally involved, is especially revealing. These movements exploited strategies similar to those of Pop Art, such as the re-appropriation of images taken from the media, cartoons, and movies, and they turned them into critical tools by means of this anti-expressionist and impersonal aesthetic. They defined themselves and thought of themselves outside this framework.

They saw themselves in the tradition of realism, as an avant-garde realism that combined visual experimentation and social and political involvement.

**In just a few words, how would you describe the experience of writing this book?**

The origin and completion of this book are inextricably linked to my international peregrinations as a teacher and scholar from one institution and country to another. This journeying, which spawned many conversations with colleagues and ideas that I shared with my husband as we made our way across Europe, was decisive to the writing of this book. In fact, *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne* was born out of my own experience as a Spanish post-doctoral researcher abroad, when I discovered that no room had been made for Spanish art and criticism in the hegemonic discourse of modern art that was still omnipresent a decade ago. From the start, the book was based on a thesis and on field work that involved immersing myself in a number of archives in Spain, France Italy, and England, cross-referencing bibliographies (in art history, literature, political history, economics, and philosophy, among others), and talking to protagonists who breathed life into my historical analysis. So, this book, which is based on the history of art and culture, instigated a wide-ranging and exciting process of interdisciplinary research that got me to think about the agency of art and culture in relation to totalitarian regimes.

# The winners of the Prix Pierre Daix since 2015

- 2023: Paula Barreiro López, for *Compagnons de lutte. Avant-garde et critique d'art en Espagne pendant le franquisme* (Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme)
- 2022: Jérémie Koering, for *Les iconophages. Une histoire de l'ingestion des images* ["The Iconophages: A History of the Ingestion of Images"] (Actes Sud, the "Les Apparences" series)
- 2021: Germain Viatte, for *L'envers de la médaille* ["The other side of the coin"] (L'Atelier contemporain)
- 2020: Pascal Rousseau, for *Hypnose. Art et hypnotisme de Messmer à nos jours* ["Hypnosis: Art and Hypnosis from Messmer to the Present Day"] (ENSBA-Musée des Beaux-arts de Nantes)
- 2019: Rémi Labrusse, for *Préhistoire. L'envers du temps* ["Prehistory: The Opposite of Time"] (Hazan, the "Beaux Arts" series)
- 2018: Pierre Wat, for *Pérégrinations. Paysages entre nature et histoire* ["Peregrinations: Wanderings Between Nature and History"] (Hazan, the "Beaux Arts" series)
- 2017: Elisabeth Lebovici, for *Ce que le sida m'a fait. Art et activisme à la fin du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle* ["What AIDS did to me: Art and Activism in the late Twentieth Century"] (JRP Ringier and La maison rouge – Fondation Antoine de Galbert)
- 2016: Maurice Fréchuret, for *Effacer. Paradoxe d'un geste artistique* ["Erase: the Paradox of an Artistic Gesture"] (Les Presses du réel)
- 2015: Yve-Alain Bois, for *Ellsworth Kelly. Catalogue raisonné of paintings and sculpture, 1940 -1953, Tome 1* (Cahiers d'art)  
& Marie-Anne Lescourret, pour *Aby Warburg ou la tentation du regard* ["Aby Warburg, or the Temptation of Looking"] (Hazan, collection « Beaux Arts »)  
(ex æquo)

# Pinault Collection

## **The collector**

An art lover through and through, François Pinault is one of the most important collectors of contemporary art in the world. The collection he has assembled over the last almost fifty years comprises more than 10000 works ranging from the art of the 1960s to the present day. His cultural ambition is to share his passion for the art of his time with as many people as possible. He distinguishes himself for his sustainable commitment to artists and his incessant exploration of new domains of creation. Since 2006, François Pinault has focused on three cultural activities in particular: museums, a programme of exhibitions held at large, and initiatives to support artists and promote the history of modern and contemporary art.

## **The museums**

The museums began with three exceptional sites in Venice: Palazzo Grassi, acquired in 2005 and inaugurated in 2006, the Punta della Dogana, which opened in 2009, and the Teatrino, which opened in 2013. In May 2021, the Pinault Collection opened its new museum at the Bourse de Commerce in Paris with its inaugural exhibition "Ouverture". These four sites were restored and developed by Pritzker Prize-winning Japanese architect Tadao Ando. In the three museums, works from the Pinault Collection are exhibited in routinely changing solo and thematic group exhibitions. All the exhibitions actively involve artists who are invited to create works on site or on the basis of a specific commission. The museum's significant amount of cultural and educational programming also includes partnerships with local and international institutions and universities.

## **The programming at large**

Beyond Venice and Paris, works from the collection are now regularly included in exhibitions across the world: from Paris to Moscow, Monaco, Seoul, Lille, Dinard, Dunkerque, Essen, Stockholm, Rennes, Beirut, and Marseilles. Upon request from public and private institutions the world over, the Pinault Collection also has an ongoing policy of lending its works and making joint acquisitions with other major actors in the field of contemporary art.

## **The Lens residency**

Located in a former rectory that was redeveloped by Lucie Niney and Thibault Marca from the studio NeM, the Pinault Collection's artist's residency was inaugurated in December 2015. As a place to live and work, it provides time and space for artistic practice in a site that is well-suited for creating things. Residents are chosen by a selection committee that includes representatives from the Pinault Collection, the Hauts-de France Regional Office of Cultural Affairs, the Grand Large FRAC Regional Contemporary Art Foundation, the Le Fresnoy School for Contemporary Art, the Louvre Lens, and the Lille Art Museum, or LaM.

## **The Prix Pierre Daix**

François Pinault created the Prix Pierre Daix in 2015 in homage to his friend, the historian Pierre Daix who passed away in 2014, to honor a historical work on modern or contemporary art each year. The Prix Pierre Daix has been awarded to Jérémie Koering (2022), Germain Viatte (2021), Pascal Rousseau (2020), Rémi Labrusse (2019), Pierre Wat (2018), Élisabeth Lebovici (2017), Maurice Fréruchet (2016) and to Yve-Alain Bois and Marie-Anne Lescourret (2015).