

[press release](#)

Stories of Material Life

People, places, events, fictions

The Helga de Alvear Collection is the result of acquisitions made over the past forty years which not only configure a map of the collector's concerns and interests but also possess, in the great breadth of her choices, an enormous potential for understanding recent developments in art.

Beyond her activity as a gallery owner, Helga de Alvear has been able to distinguish the field of activity from her collection, understanding it, as she repeatedly states, as a process of learning and passion. In the simplicity of this duality, however, a two-fold motivation is clearly expressed that lies between emotion and knowledge, which are the twin poles of the relationship with art from which we all mark out our connection with the artistic field.

The exhibition that is currently being announced is entitled *Histórias da vida material*.

It is a presentation of works that, in various forms and on various artistic supports, configure the relationship that the artists in the exhibition establish with the materiality of quotidian experience. The works refer at times to the body (sometimes the artist's own body, as self-representation), at times to the physicality of the space, and at other times to the political and productive relations that constitute our communal ways of life.

One of the central aspects of the exhibition, perhaps its starting point, is the presentation of a very significant series of works by the American artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1945 – 1978). The series is composed of photographs and drawings that map the exhibition and point out the various directions along which it develops.

Throughout the exhibition, the works relate to each other via axes of connection that highlight the diverse ways of representing and fictionalising the world, maintaining a constant feeling of disquiet and analysis arising from the confrontation between what is familiar to us (the house, the library, the media, the body, desire, economic and productive relations etc) and the subtle deviation and defamiliarisation that the artists use in their processes of representation.

Curated by Delfim Sardo, the exhibition is the subject of a catalogue that contains extensive documentation on the works on display and an essay by the curator.

[works:](#) 114 works of art in exhibition

[artists:](#) Agut, Pep | Almeida, Helena | Alÿs, Francis | Araújo, Vasco | Artschwager, Richard | Baldessari, John | Bryce, Fernando | Casebere, James | Collis, Susan | Croft, José Pedro | Cruz, Ángela de la | Damasceno, José | diCorcia, Philip-Lorca | Douglas, Stan | Elmgreen & Dragset | Feldmann, Hans-Peter | Fragateiro, Fernanda | Garaicoa, Carlos | Graham, Dan | Graham, Paul | Höfer, Candida | Iglesias, Cristina | Jaar, Alfredo | Kelley, Mike | Kippenberger, Martin | Klauke, Jürgen | Leirner, Jac | Lombardi, Mark | Louro, João | Macchi, Jorge | Matta-Clark, Gordon | Nauman, Bruce | Neto, Ernesto | Oiticica, Hélio e d´Almeida, Neville | Orozco, Gabriel | Oursler, Tony | Queiroz, Jorge | Raetz, Markus | Ruff, Thomas | Sarmiento, Julião | Schneider, Gregor | Schütte, Thomas | Sekula, Allan | Spalletti, Ettore | Varejão, Adriana | Wall, Jeff | Weiner, Lawrence | Wilson, Jane & Louise

Curator

Delfim Sardo (1962)

Lives and works in Lisbon.

An independent curator since 1991, he has been the Director of the Centro Cultural de Belém and a consultant for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon).

He was the Executive Commissioner of the Lisbon Architecture Triennale 2010.

He was the Commissioner of the Portuguese Representation at the 48th Venice Biennale (artist, Jorge Molder).

He was also the Commissioner of the Portuguese representation at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2010 (architects: Siza Vieira, Aires Mateus, Carrilho da Graça, Bak Gordon/films by Filipa César, João Salavisa, Julião Sarmento, João Onofre).

He regularly works as an essayist.

Published books: *Luxury Bound, the photography of Jorge Molder* (Electa, Milão, 1999); *Helena Almeida: Pés no chão, cabeça no céu* (Bial/CCB, Lisboa, 2004); *Pintura Redux* (Público Serralves, 2006); *A Visão em Apneia, escritos sobre artistas* (Babel/Athena, 2011)

He is a lecturer at the Universidade de Coimbra.

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Fundación Helga de Alvear
Pizarro, 8 – 10003 Cáceres (España)
Tel. +34 927 626 414 Fax +34 927 226 853
general@fundacionhelgadealvear.es
www.fundacionhelgadealvear.es

[technical details](#)

EXHIBITIÓN: “Stories of Material Life”

PROJECT: Delfim Sardo

ORGANIZED BY: Fundación Helga de Alvear

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF: Junta de Extremadura, Ayuntamiento de Cáceres, Diputación Provincial de Cáceres, University of Extremadura and Caja Extremadura.

[dates](#)

1 April to 4 September 2011

[press contacts](#)

Ana Domínguez

609449927

anadominguezmad@gmail.com

Roberto Díaz

927 626414

roberto.diaz@fundacionhelgadealvear.es

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address

Centro de Artes Visuales Fundación Helga de Alvear

Calle Pizarro, 8

10003 Cáceres (Spain)

Tel. +34 927 626 414 Fax: +34 927 226 853

general@fundaciónhelgadealvear.es

www.fundacionhelgadealvear.es

opening hours

2 April to 31 May, Tuesday to Saturday: 10:00-14:00 / 17:00-20:00

1 June to 4 September, Tuesday to Saturday: 10:00-14:00 / 18:00-21:00

Sunday: 10:00-14:30

Closed every Monday, except 2 and 30 May and 15 August

guided visits

Tuesday to Saturday: 10:00-13:00

Groups maximum of 30 people

Free admission | To get a guided visit, please phone (10 days in advanced)

general guided visits

7 April, 5 May, 9 June and 7 July, 18:00

thematic guided visits

28 April, 26 May, 30 June and 28 July, 18:00

[Helga de Alvear Foundation Visual Arts Centre in Cáceres:](#)

building

It is situated on the boundaries of the old part of the historical city. Dating from the modernist period, it was completed in 1910 in accordance with a plan drawn up by the architect Francisco de la Pezuela y Ramírez.

Initially, the Cáceres Visual Arts Centre occupies the remodelled building which marks the end of the first stage of the scheduled building process, until it is completed with a building designed around a new plan. The Tuñón + Mansilla architects' studio undertook the remodelling of the modernist building and the second-phase extension project, which will extend across the neighbouring estate (Pizarro 10) and the area delimited by the recently remodelled building and Camino Llano Street.

Until the works comprising the second phase are completed, the activity at the centre will run without interruption in the available spaces and a programme of exhibitions and related activities will take place.

aims

Some time ago, Helga de Alvear decided to share her collection with the world and to turn it into the frame of reference for a project intended to promote, produce, investigate and educate the public about the contemporary visual arts. The initiative was favourably received by the Council of Extremadura and, in accordance with other institutions representing the Autonomous Community, the Town Hall and the Provincial Council of Cáceres, as well as the University and the Caja de Ahorros de Extremadura, the Helga de Alvear Foundation was created in 2006 with the following aims:

To disseminate the works comprising the Helga de Alvear collection through exhibitions, exchanges, publications and computer-based media. To promote, encourage and research into the production of contemporary visual arts in all of their related aspects. To establish the criteria according to which the Cáceres Visual Arts Centre operates as well as to manage it and programme its activities. To conserve the works in the collection and to add to them according to principles based on universality and openness to experimentation and to the most significant range of languages used in art at each moment.

The Cáceres Visual Arts Centre, run by the Helga de Alvear Foundation, is the space in which these actions will take place with two aims in mind: to become an internationally recognised centre and to do so in a way that fully involves everyone through contemplation, criticism, education and creative attitude.

[Helga de Alvear Collection](#)

“I am interested in contemporary art because it speaks to us of our times and of ourselves, because it creates and develops languages that can explain, in a new way, the world in which we happen to live and of which we often only brush the surface”.

Helga de Alvear

In 1967, Helga de Alvear bought her first work of art. Without suspecting the dimensions that this act would come to acquire, she thereby initiated an activity that she has maintained until the present day, and which has gained in passion, professionalism and tenacity, three qualities which have enabled her to amass Spain’s most significant private collection of international contemporary art and one of the most important in Europe.

Without intending to remake the history of recent art or the movements that structure it, Helga de Alvear has been acquiring works which, regardless of the artist that created them, interest her because of the artistic advances that they represent, the extent to which they match her interests, or their ability to constitute a conceptual or metaphorical reflection on the world in which we live.

The Helga de Alvear collection currently consists of over two thousand works. However, the collection is not conceived as a closed and definitive whole. On the contrary, it is constantly growing in order to respond to the desire to keep up with current and future changes and developments in contemporary art.

Following the completion of the first stage of the Cáceres Centre of Visual Arts with the regeneration and museographical overhaul of the building known as *La Casa Grande*, the exhibition *Margins of silence* opened to the public, displaying a selection of 115 works, produced between 1963 and 2009, from the Helga de Alvear collection. It is now followed by *Stories of Material Life*, a new journey through some of the themes which most concern contemporary artists. In short, *Stories of Material Life* constitutes a further example of the potential of the Helga de Alvear collection.

HELGA DE ALVEAR

Helga de Alvear was born in the city of Kirn/Nahe (Rheinland-Pfalz), Germany, in 1936. She studied at the Salem School near Lake Constance, and subsequently in Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland. She furthered her studies afterwards in London for a year.

In 1957 she travelled to Spain to learn Spanish and met the architect Jaime de Alvear. They married in 1959 and she set up residence in Madrid. They have three children, Maria, Ana and Patricia.

In 1967 Helga de Alvear met Juana Mordó and began what would later turn into her art collection. She came into contact with artists from the Cuenca group and from the El Paso group and she became increasingly interested in the Spanish art scene.

In January 1980 she started to work at the Juana Mordó gallery: those were years of apprenticeship, both in relation to management and to honing her knowledge about international art scene, particularly thanks to attending art fairs such as Art Basel, the FIAC in Paris and the Cologne Fair. Furthermore, in 1982 art galleries took a step towards innovating the Spanish scene by establishing the ARCO art fair.

As time passed, Helga de Alvear's involvement at the Juana Mordó gallery became essential until in 1984, when Juana died, she took the helm. Over the next 10 years she would follow in the artistic and professional footsteps of her mentor.

In 1995, however, she decided to take a turn in her career by opening a new gallery under her own name in a space measuring more than 900 square metres next to the Reina Sofía Museum. Her latest project championed international contemporary art with a special emphasis on photography, video and installation – at a time when these mediums were practically unknown in Spain.

Today, Helga de Alvear's project is one of the best-established and longest-running art galleries on the Spanish scene and it has earned widespread international acclaim.

Helga de Alvear has been awarded the Medal of Extremadura in 2007 and the Gold Medal for Merit in the category of Fine Arts in 2008, which is bestowed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture, to mention just a few.

While carrying out her professional duties Helga de Alvear has been able to give free rein to her grand passion: art collecting. At the present time her Collection includes more than 2,500 pieces by Spanish and international artists. The Collection will be donated to the Regional Government of Extremadura and the Centre of Visual Arts is currently being built in the city of Cáceres to house it.

The mission of the Collection is also to contribute to public awareness about art and it often loans out works to institutions around the world. In addition, it has been the subject of a number of in-depth exhibitions, most importantly:

- In 2005 at the Wäinö Aaltosen Museum in Turku (Finland)
- In 2005 at the MEIAC in Badajoz (Spain)
- In 2006 at the Belem Centre in Lisbon (Portugal)
- In 2008 at the Falkenberg Collection Centre in Hamburg (Germany)

VISUAL ARTS CENTRE HELGA DE ALVEAR FOUNDATION

STRATEGY, NOT TACTICS.

The project strives to listen to the space and to imagine a venue where it would be possible to preserve the way in which the city stirs without neglecting our day and age.

Consequently, it is a matter of finding a common ground between the contemporary and the thing that allows the city to recognize itself – of locating a device, or better, a strategy, containing both sides.

A strategy conceived from the perspective of opportunities. A set of rules dictated by pre-existent aspects. A reinterpretation of those aspects to transform the project, both form and content, into a gift for the city.

AN EDGE THAT IS A MEETING POINT

The plot of land is a frontier in the city both historically, being on the fringes of the Middle Ages of the old city, and geographically, as an element scaling the heights and conforming to the bends of a watercourse.

The design restores the erstwhile qualities of transit and exchange to the plot of land, qualities that characterized the areas outside the city walls, and rendered them permeable. From Pizarro Street, across the walkway roof, through the remaining back garden and the courtyards, runs a public footpath which is another link in the chain of squares and alleyways that one can follow to explore the old quarter of Cáceres, and which is the natural way to navigate the slope which leads to the new part of the city.

In the same manner that art, which was previously for a privileged elite, has become accessible, the building also strives by means of an urban *trompe l'oeil*, if not to eliminate, then at least to bend and soften the only edge that has been there almost forever, exploiting the gaps and the building's

negative image to arrange a public artery which penetrates through the realm of the private without ever touching it.

NATURE AS A MODEL

The architecture of our times has turned its sights back onto arrangements presided by an abstract materiality, as if man, who had for so long looked at nature and strived to understand it from the viewpoint of technique and culture, today wished to shift his view and to contemplate culture and architecture too, the things that make us what we are, from the viewpoint of nature, from its astonishing mixture of constancy and change.

Accordingly, the new building seeks its shape in the surrounding nature inspiring and marking the city; in the yielding cosiness of the back garden that embraces the mother house; and it moulds itself, liquid-like, to the edges of the grounds.

THE PRESENCE OF THE POSSIBLE: THAT WHICH REMAINS AND THAT WHICH CHANGES

The design is faithful to the essence of the former building and the proposed complex does not greatly differ from what the site already is: a house with a garden.

The powerful features remain, the rotund volumes are practically untouched, but its apparent hermeticism is dissolved by gentle pathways which –as a reflection of the outer path between the courtyards– run through the inside of the new zone and colonize the orthogonal, stony geometry of the “Casa Grande”. A “house”, in terms of its function too, which accommodates the administrative core required to keep the centre running, and a “garden”, set aside for light recreation, enjoyable walks and where the storerooms and facilities serving the house are located.

The proposed complex, a sum of horizontals giving rise to verticals –like the earth and the mountains– seeks to make manifest the amazing presence of the possible, that is, the sweet human perplexity shrouded in that which remains and that which changes, the predictable and the unexpected.

Mansilla + Tuñón

Biography

Luis M. Mansilla (Madrid, 1959), graduated from the E.T.S.A.M in 1981, and obtained a Ph. D at the E.T.S.A.M in 1998. In 1984 he was granted board at the Spanish Fine Arts Academy in Rome, and in 1987 he was awarded the Swedish Institute and European Council Scholarship, for wich he studied in Stockholm at the Arkitekturmuseet for investigation.

Emilio Tuñón Alvarez (Madrid, 1958), graduated from the E.T.S.A.M in 1981, and obtained a Ph. D at the E.T.S.A.M in 1998. He worked at the General Office of the Department of fine Arts in 1982, and at the General Office of Public Architecture at the Ministry of Public Works in 1983

In 1992, Emilio Tuñón Alvarez y Luis M. Mansilla establish the architecture firm MANSILLA + TUÑÓN ARQUITECTOS, an office dedicated to the confrontation of theory and academic practice, with design and building activity.

Emulio Tuñón and Luis Mansilla are full professors in the Architectural Design Department of the Architecture School of Madrid, and have been visiting professors at several universities. Princeton University School of Architecture (2008-2010), Harvard Graduate School of Design (2006-2008), Barcelona International Architecture School (2001-2002), Architecture San Pablo CEU Foundation (2000-2001), Barcelona Architecture School (1999-2000), New Puerto Rico Architecture School, Navarra Architecture School (1998-1999) and Frankfurt Städelschule (1997-1998).

In 1993 they created the thinking exchange cooperative CIRCO, for which they publish a bulletin of the same name. This bulletin has been awarded the following awards: FAD Award (2007), 3rd. Iberoamerican Architecture and Engineering Biennial Publication Prize (2002) and COAM Annual Prize for Cultural initiatives Award (1995). Since 1998 they have been members of the editorial board of PASAJES magazine, which was awarded the COAM annual Prize for Cultural Initiatives Award (1999).

Projects

- 2008 Energy Dome in the Environmental City of Soria. 1st Prize, Spain.
- 2008 Transport Museum of Madrid. 1st Prize, Spain.
- 2007 Migration/Territory Museum in Algeciras. 1st Prize, Spain
- 2007 C.I.C.C.M. New convention palace in Madrid. 1st Prize, Spain
- 2006 Transport Museum of Torrejón de la Calzada, Spain.
- 2005 Pedro Barrié de la Maza Foundation, Vigo, Spain.
- 2005 Visual Arts Centre Helga de Alvear Foundation. 1st Prize, Cáceres, Spain.
- 2004 MUSAC, León, Spain.
- 2004 Urban planning for Valbuena in Logroño, 1st Prize, Logroño, Spain.
- 2004 Castro Tecnológico de Lalín. 1st Prize, Pontevedra, Spain.
- 2003-2007 Villa o8, Nanjing, China.
- 2003 Public Library in Calle de los Artistas. 1st Prize, Madrid, Spain.
- 2003 Ciudadela in Logroño. 1st Prize, Logroño, Spain.
- 2003 Museum of Cantabria. 1st Prize, Santander, Spain.
- 2002 Grand Slam in Madrid, Madrid, Spain.
- 2002 Civic Centre in Sabadell, Sabadell, Spain.
- 2002 Madrid Games, Madrid, España.
- 2002 Spanish Royal Collections Museum in Madrid. 1st Prize, Madrid, Spain.
- 2001 San Fermines Museum in Pamplona. 1st Prize, Pamplona, Spain.
- 2001 Construcción en Cruz. 2º premio, Teruel, España.
- 2000 Cultural Center in Brescia. 1st Prize, Brescia, Italia.
- 1997-2000 Castellón Fine Arts Museum. 1st Prize, Castellón, Spain.
- 1994-2002 Madrid Regional Documentary Centre (El Águila). 1st Prize, Madrid, Spain.
- 1994-2001 Leon´s Concert Hall. 1st Prize, León, Spain.
- 1994-1998 Indoor Swimming-pool in San Fernando de Henares. 1st Prize, Madrid, Spain.
- 1993-1996 Archeological and Fine Arts Provincial Museum of Zamora, Zamora, Spain.

Awards

- 2007 Mies van der Rohe Award (MUSAC).
 - 2007 Saloni Award (Pedro Barrié de la Maza Foundation in Vigo, Spain).
 - 2007 FAD Award (Pedro Barrié de la Maza Foundation in Vigo, Spain).
 - 2006 VIA Award.
 - 2005 ENOR Award (MUSAC).
 - 2003 COAM Award (Madrid Regional Documentary Centre).
 - 2003 Spanish Architecture Award (Auditorium of León).
 - 2003 Finalist of the Mies van der Rohe Award (Auditorio de León).
 - 2001 FAD Award (Castellón Fine Arts Museum).
 - 2001 Finalist of the Mies van der Rohe Award (Castellón Fine Arts Museum).
 - 2000 Excellent Work Award.
 - 2000 COACV Award (Castellón Fine Arts Museum).
 - 1999 Finalist of the Mies van der Rohe Award (Indor Swimming-pool in San Fernando de Henares).
 - 1997 Finalist of the Mies van der Rohe Award (Archeological and Fine Arts Provincial Museum of Zamora).
 - 1997 CEOE Foundation Award (Museum of Zamora).
 - 1996 Arquitecti Award (Museum of Zamora).
- Actually Mansilla + Tuñón are working in the following project:

Spanish Royal Collections Museum in Madrid (Royal Palace in Madrid), Museum of Cantabria, Urban planning for Valbuena in Logroño, C.I.C.C.M. New convention palace in Madrid and Energy Dome in the Environmental City of Soria. In Cáceres exist, as well as of the Visual Arts Centre Helga de Alvear Foundation, two projects more: The Atrio Relais-Château (Cáceres) and the Rojo-Burgos House (La Vera).

www.mansilla-tunon.com [Link]