

ARCO 2019 subscribes to the controversy

Madrilenian fair looks at Latin America

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USPA NEWS - The International Fair of Contemporary Art in Madrid seems to have paid tribute to the controversy. Works presented in the years 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2018 were described as scandalous by critics and the public. And in this 2019 there is no lack of controversy: a giant doll made of the materials used to build the 'fallas' of Valencia - sculptures that, after being exposed on the street, are burned - and which represents King Felipe VI, wounds sensitivities .

The 'ninot', the name by which the dolls that are burned in Valencia are known every March 19, from the King of Spain was presented by the Prometeo gallery in Madrid. Its price is 200,000 euros (USD 230,335.14) and the sale contract includes the buyer's obligation to burn it within a year. There are candidates interested in taking over the controversial figure, but none so far accepts to burn it. According to the authors of the work, Santiago Sierra and Eugenio Merino, that is a nonnegotiable condition because the 'ninots' are built to be grass of the flames. In return, the buyer will have a complete graphic dossier of the entire process and will be able to see it as many times as he wants, thanks to a film that will be filmed.

The Kings of Spain, Felipe VI and Letizia, inaugurated ARCO 2019 on Thursday, but did not visit the stand of the Prometeo gallery. According to the organization of the fair, it would have been a lack of respect to the head of State. The Kings did visit the other stands. ARCO 2019 brings together 203 galleries from 31 countries, in addition to 15 from Peru, another 13 in the 'Dialogues' section and 21 in the 'Opening' section. The fair consolidates its Latin American projection with the presence of Peru as the guest of honor. A total of 24 Peruvian artists are present at the fair. The Peru Forum, organized by Miguel A. Lopez, proposes conversations about the particularities of Peruvian contemporary art, with the participation of the visual artist Fernando Bryce, the photographer Roberto Huarcaya and the artist and former director of the National Institute of Culture of Iquitos Christian Bendayan.

The international participation in ARCO reaches 70% this year. 29% of this international presence comes from the American continent, with 40 galleries from 12 countries. The United States is represented by the Alexander and Bonin gallery in New York. In this edition, the International Contemporary Art Fair of Madrid is committed to dialogue with artists. Also for the debate about the present and the future of modern art.

Many wonder if King Felipe VI's 'ninot' is art. Many, too, consider it a provocation. And the question they ask is whether art should provoke politically. It's not the first time. In 2010, the composition 'Starway to heaven' represented an Arab praying, a Catholic priest on top of him and a rabbi at the top. It provoked a formal protest from the Israeli Embassy in Madrid.

'Always Franco', in 2012, presented the dictator, who died in 1975, in a freezer. The gallery that took him to ARCO had to face a complaint from the Francisco Franco Foundation. Two years later, in 2014, 'Congress topless', by the Frenchman Yann Leto, was not suitable for children under 18 years of age. It represented two strippers dancing in a bar. The two daily passes were crowded with the public. In 2015, 'No hay para tanto chorizo' - a Spanish word game that identifies thieves as "chorizos" - denounced political and economic corruption in a year that saw the birth of the first citizen movements in Spain.

Finally, in 2018, the gallery Helga de Alvear presented 'The Political Prisoners', by Santiago Sierra, which identified the Catalan separatist leaders as political prisoners. The work was withdrawn from ARCO to avoid controversy and sold for 80,000 euros (USD 90,134.06 at the current dollar exchange rate).

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com