



MUSEU
D'ART CONTEMPORANI
DE BARCELONA
CENTRE D'ESTUDIS
I DOCUMENTACIÓ

Description of the Xavier Miserachs collection

IDENTIFICATION

Reference code

CAT XXX BARCELONA MACBA

Description

Collection

Title

Xavier Miserachs

Date(s)

Date created: 1954 - 1998

Date added: 2011

Size and media

60,000 negatives (35 mm, 6x6, 9x12)

20,000 transparencies (35 mm, 6x6, 9x12)

2,500 contact sheets

6 glass plaques (9x12)

13 binders with documentation

43 monographs, 1 thesis and 20 journals and periodicals

CONTEXT

Name of producer

Xavier Miserachs i Ribalta

History of producer

Xavier Miserachs was born in Barcelona on 12 July 1937, the son of Manuel Miserachs, a haematologist, and Montserrat Ribalta, a librarian. Along with his classmates, the brothers Ramon and Antoni Fabregat, he came into contact with photography as a young man whilst studying at the Eulàlia Technical College. In 1952, he joined the photography club Agrupació Fotogràfica de Catalunya, where he met Oriol Maspons, forging what was to be a lifelong friendship. In 1954, when he was just seventeen, he won the First Luis Navarro Trophy, awarded at the Agrupació Fotogràfica de Catalunya's Second National Modern Photography Show. That same year he began to study medicine, though he eventually dropped out in his final year to devote himself fully to photography.

In 1957, the first of two now legendary exhibitions featuring photographs by Xavier Miserachs, Ricard Terré and Ramón Masats took place. The first travelled to three of the main centres for modern Spanish photography during those times: the Agrupació Fotogràfica de Catalunya in Barcelona; AFAL in Almería; and the Real Sociedad Fotográfica in Madrid. That first exhibition

marked the emergence of what the Barcelonan critic Josep Maria Casademont called the “new avant-garde” in Spanish photography. Two years later, in 1959, Terré, Miserachs and Masats presented their second collective show at the recently-inaugurated Sala Aixelà in Barcelona, where Casademont was the manager.

In 1961, having completed his military service, Miserachs established his own studio, where he combined commissions as a professional photographer with work that would later form part of his renowned photography books, published in the 1960s: *Barcelona blanc i negre* (Aymà, 1964), *Costa Brava Show* (Kairós, 1966) and *Los cachorros* (Lumen, 1967), key works in modern Spanish photography at the time. Miserachs’ main influences included the work of the photographer William Klein and his books on different cities, particularly the first, devoted to New York and published in 1955. Moreover, the exhibition *The Family of Man* (1955) caused a deep impression on Miserachs, as it did on many of his generation. This was a crucial influence in his creation of a neorealist poetic that could narrate the transition of the working classes towards a new metropolitan environment.

From the late-1960s on, Miserachs extended his work as a photographer to include advertising, reports and, on many occasions, photography books. From 1966, he travelled constantly thanks to his work as a correspondent for such publications as *La Actualidad Española*, *Gaceta Ilustrada*, *La Vanguardia*, *Interviú* and *Triunfo*. It was in this last magazine that, in 1968, Miserachs signed an exclusive annual contract, going on to publish such reports as: “París se pregunta: ¿es una revolución?” [Paris Asks: Is it a Revolution]; “De Nanterre a las barricadas” [From Nanterre to the Barricades]; and “La primavera en Praga” [Spring in Prague], amongst others. In 1969, he co-founded the Eina School, becoming its first photography teacher, and in 1970 his activities briefly extended to film, when he was the artistic director and director of photography on two underground films directed by Enrique Vila-Matas and Emma Cohen. That same year, he also directed and produced a short, *Amén, historieta muda* [Amen, Silent Story].

During the last years of his life, Miserachs took up writing with a view to leaving testimony to his ideas about photography, ideas embodied in a belligerent approach to what he considered the dominant photographic culture and its institutions. The most outstanding results from this enterprise include his last two books, *Falls de contactes. Memòries* (Edicions 62, 1998) and *Criterio fotográfico* (Omega, 1998), both published in the year of his death.

Xavier Miserachs died on 14 August 1998, at the age of 61, shortly after receiving the St George’s Cross, awarded to him by the Government of Catalonia in that same year.

Archival history

The collection was built up by the photographer Xavier Miserachs over the course of his professional career. In the late eighties, Miserachs himself organised the negatives and contact sheets with the help of the historian Maria Dolors Tapias Gil, who was given the original contact sheets for the photobook *Barcelona blanc i negre* as a gift in exchange for her work. The ordering of the archive that resulted from this process has remained to this day. In the sixties, the archive was affected by a flood, which damaged some of the the materials.

After the death of Xavier Miserachs, the holdings were stored and managed by his two daughters, who also inherited the exploitation rights and the right to exercise the moral rights of the author. In late 2009, the MACBA Study Centre contacted the two heiresses to express its interest in the documentary collection, setting in motion a process that culminated on February 3, 2011 with the signing of an agreement for the deposit of the material for a period of 25 years and the physical transfer of the archive to the Study Centre.

On the same day, the MACBA signed a second deposit agreement with Maria Dolors Tapias to secure the original contact sheets for the photobook *Barcelona blanc i negre* along with the rest of the collection, so as to enable them to be accessible for consultation under the same conditions.

Details of reception of the collection

On February 3, 2011, all the materials were received at the MACBA Study Centre. A contract for the loan of the material and the management of associated rights was entered into with the Heiresses of Xavier Miserachs, and a loan contract was entered into with Maria Dolors Tapias Gil.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and content

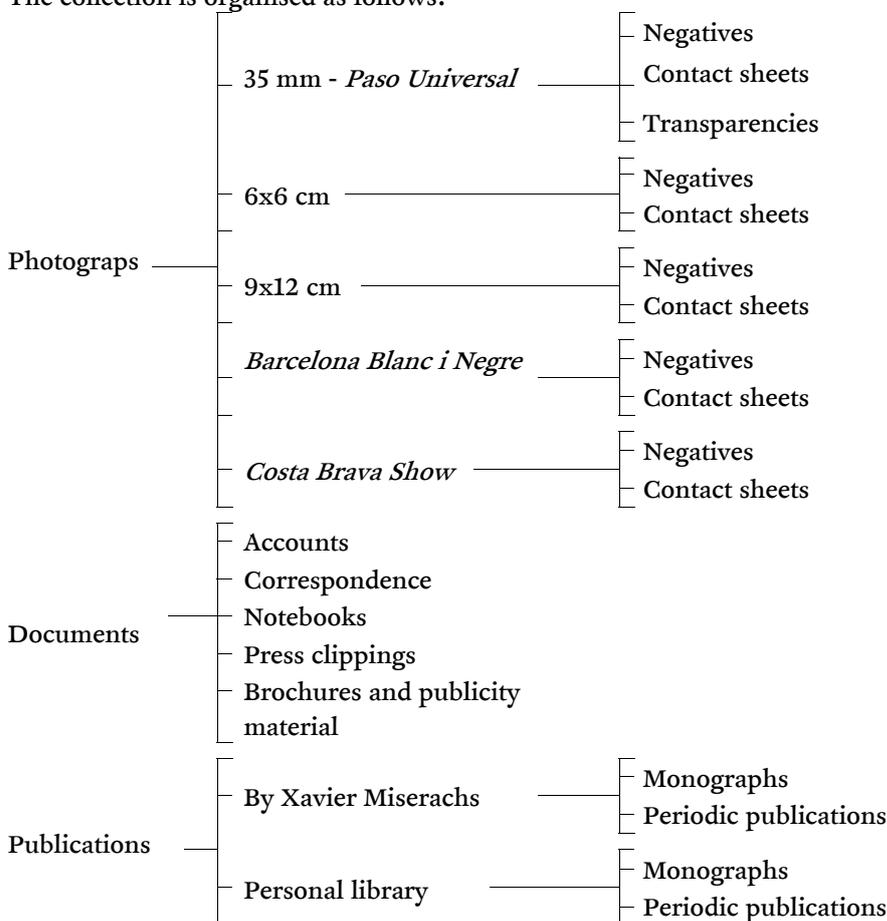
The content of the holdings is structured into three main blocks:

- Some 80,000 photographic images, of which approximately 60,000 are negatives and 20,000 are transparencies in various formats. The material, which includes some 2,500 contact sheets, covers Miserachs' 44-year professional career, spanning from 1954 to 1998.
- Administrative documents relating to the professional career of Xavier Miserachs, which covers the period spanning from 1970 to 1998 and includes some of his notebooks.
- A series of publications from the personal library of Xavier Miserachs, which include many of his own works, along with some literature on photography, issues of specialist journals, etc.

The material in the collection has been supplemented with the original contact sheets for the publication *Barcelona blanc i negre*, owned by Maria Dolors Tapias since 1991.

System of organisation

The collection is organised as follows:



Appraisal, selection and elimination

All the material in the collection is for permanent preservation.

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions of access

There is unrestricted access to the material according to the rules and regulations for use of the MACBA Study Centre, except in regards to the provisions of Spain's Organic Laws on Data Protection and on Civil Protection relating to the right to honour, personal and family privacy and self-image.

Conditions of reproduction

Copyright management.

On behalf of the Miserachs Heiresses, the Study Centre manages requests for reproduction of photographs and other documents that form part of the Miserachs collection, receiving a percentage of the revenue generated from copyright in exchange for the custodianship and management of the collection.

The term "reproduction" refers to copying of photographs and other documents in the collection in any format or media, expressly excluding "photographic prints." Likewise, the MACBA is expressly excluded from management of reproduction in the case of photographs for which the rights are owned jointly by the Miserachs Heiresses and the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation.

Images licensed under a Creative Commons licence (Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivatives 3.0 Spain).

The Miserachs Heiresses authorise the MACBA to diffuse a maximum of ten (10) images from the collection under this licence, in order to increase dissemination. The selection of these images has been carried out with the Miserachs Heiresses and it may be modified, by mutual agreement, if deemed necessary.

Physical characteristics and technical requirements

The collection was received in a well-preserved condition. Nevertheless, a series of common pathologies were detected, mostly linked to their use and storage. The contact sheets are the group most affected by physical degradation, mainly due to the fact that they are working documents. They contain visible reference marks, notes (marker, pens, pencil, etc.) and frame marks that documented Miserachs' work, as well as finger prints, self-adhesive tape, small tears and abrasions, and signs of oxidation from metallic elements like paper clips and staples.

In the sixties, part of the collection was incidentally exposed to a relatively high degree of humidity, which ended up bringing about alterations due to an attack of microorganisms. On reception, the personal documents and publications showed signs of common pathologies, mainly caused by the accumulation of dirt, environmental changes and factors intrinsic to the constituent materials of the physical media. The negatives and slides were received in a good overall state of preservation.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

Existence and location of reproductions

A digital reproduction of a selection of the collection is available and can be accessed by the public at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/arxiu-macba/>

CONTROL OF THE DESCRIPTIVE RECORD

Authorship and date(s)

Inventory: December 2010

Cataloguing: January 2011 -

Sources

The description unit and the Miserachs family.

Rules and conventions

Archival Description Standard of Catalonia (NODAC). Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya. Department of Culture. Sub-directorate General of Archives, 2007.