Encuentros de Pamplona (1972)  
Presented by José Díaz Cuyás  
7 pm

Encuentros de Pamplona  
26 June to 3 July 1972  
Different venues in Pamplona

Artists in attendance in Pamplona  

Total number of artists represented at the Encuentros de Pamplona: 348

Curators: José Luis Alexanco and Luis de Pablo (Alea group)³

“In the summer of 1971, Soledad Interrumpida [Interrupted Solitude], an artistic acoustic work by myself and Luis de Pablo, had its premiere in Buenos Aires. This event, preceded by much time working and exchanging ideas, gave way to other things, from trips through the Andes to reflections on how to inhabit art. In autumn, back in Madrid, the Huarte family commissioned de Pablo (then director of the Alea group) to organise a series of concerts in memory of their father Mr. Félix Huarte, who had recently passed away. To this end, the continuation of our reflections began to take the shape of an art festival that would not be solely limited to music and which would, in addition, be created and designed by the artists themselves. The Huarte family understood the idea, financed it, collaborated and came to our defence. Moreover, they didn’t impose anything on us. With this essential complicity and with support from the Regional Council of Navarra and the Pamplona City Council, the project took on a more and more ambitious shape, which resulted in the Encuentros in the summer of 1972. The crux of the idea was to create a new way of inhabiting art, sharing the stage, getting the spectator involved, bringing feelings together in harmony, mixing the avant-garde with the traditional, art with sound, with constant attention paid to the quality of the events and their ability to come alive. The title would define our wish; the location was ideal for fitting enough venues into the old quarter of a city to host the numerous artistic happenings that were proposed. The main figures were sought among those who embodied what was to come and what had already become established in the different trends. It lent itself to putting new concepts face to face with those that were already apparently settled. The controversy was on.” José Luis Alexanco

“A Festival Organised by Artists
In their presentations, the organisers insisted that the aim of this event was not, as happens in other cases, selling or promotion. This was why, according to what they said, there were no intermediaries – it was the artists themselves who organised it. It is worth underlining that the organisers, Luis de Pablo and José Luis Alexanco, insisted on their complete freedom in decision-making, with the only limit being the funds that were available. All of the participating artists were paid the same amount: one thousand dollars. Those who joined in off-programme were offered the production of their works.”

“Public Art and Occupation of the City
In the Encuentros de Pamplona’s orientation, a festive, public spirit and a desire to communicate can be seen, setting it apart from other meetings. Regardless of whether or not their objective was fulfilled, the Encuentros were conceived as a festival for the city and a snapshot of the city, which can be related to a purpose that was performative or eventful rather than exhibitory. All of the performances were free of charge.”

“Balancing the Arts and Hybridisation of the Media
In the programme there is a clear desire to balance the artistic genres, to put cinema, poetry, music, theatre and so forth on an equal footing; to look for a dialogue between the contemporary, technology and non-Western or ethnic traditions; and, above all, one perceives the desire to increase the power of trends that seek hybridisation among the media, of tendencies of action and public art. The intermedia predominate.”

José Díaz Cuyás

3 DÍAZ CUYÁS, José, with collaboration from Carmen Pardo. “Pamplona era una fiesta: tragicomedia del arte español”, op. cit., pp. 43, 44, 52.
A Personal Balance

“The Encuentros were plagued by accidents. The event was inaugurated with an uproar: the night before it began, a bomb went off at the monument to General Sanjurjo that stood in front of the hotel that would provide accommodation for a large number of participants. In some areas of the city propaganda sheets signed by ETA calling for a boycott of the Encuentros in the name of working class interests were passed out. More than a few of the performances planned had to be cancelled or moved to other venues for various reasons. J. M. Prada’s ‘pneumatic dome’, which came to have a certain emblematic value, was deflated before all was said and done. Criticism made its presence felt. There were violent arguments, serious threats and accusations; dark conspiracies were spoken of and statements were crossed... There was nothing, however, that we might not have expected.”

“I think that even with all of the contradictions and conflicts the Encuentros were a memorable happening. Some of the situations and many of the performances are still alive in my mind’s eye. But it is only possible for me to give them consideration from the present. The impetuous idea of progress (in the end, polishing) that the avant-garde represented, according to which responsibility in this process is entirely ours and which, above and beyond anything else, is the result of an optimistic view of human nature, finds itself today in a state of ruin. Modernity no longer means anything. In its place we are left with a compulsive addiction to institutionalised change. A simulated change. The torture of *innovation.”

José Díaz Cuyás

He teaches Aesthetics at the University of La Laguna (Tenerife), and is the director of Acto Ediciones and of the art journal Acto (www.revista-acto.net). He published the book *Cuerpos a motor* (Las Palmas and Santiago de Compostela, 1997) and the catalogue raisonné *Ir y venir de Valcárcel Medina* (Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2002). He has been giving lectures and publishing articles in specialist journals since the 1980s.

Recently he curated the exhibition *Encuentros de Pamplona 1972: Fin de fiesta del arte experimental* (MNCARS, Madrid, from 28 October 2009 to 22 February 2010).

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From the text "Encuentros y desencuentros", in *Los Encuentros de Pamplona. 25 años después*, Madrid. MNCARS, 1997, pp. 43, 44.

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Selected bibliography


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FILARE [Alberto Fraile]. "Mi resumen de los Encuentros", El Pensamiento Navarro, 4 de julio de 1972, p. 16.

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OLLARRA [José Javier Uranga]. "Pamplona y el arte actual", Diario de Navarra, 1 de julio de 1972.


**Other sources**

TVE (TV2) programme *Galería (revista de artes y letras)*, two monographic programmes devoted to *Encuentros de Pamplona*, 1972.


Interview with José Díaz Cuyás about the exhibition *Encuentros de Pamplona 1971: fin de fiesta del arte experimental*, en *Diario de Navarra*, 26 October 2009: