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For Immediate Use

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***Singular Spaces: From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art Environments***

April 12, 2015–September 6, 2015

*Fowler exhibition explores the fanciful art environments of eight self-taught Spanish artists*



Francisco González Gragera (b. 1935)  
Rooftop ornaments, *El Capricho de Cotrina*. Photo: Jo Farb Hernández, April 2008

*Singular Spaces* presents forty-seven photographs by Jo Farb Hernández documenting the monumental art environments of eight self-taught artists from Spain. The exhibition explores Hernández' extensive study of Spanish environmental artists — she crisscrossed Spain from 2000-2014, traveling thousands of miles to meet and interview artists and document their work. Comprised of intriguing and idiosyncratic sculptures, gardens, and buildings, the artists developed environmental sites organically without formal architectural or engineering plans. Often highly fanciful and colorful, the sites are frequently characterized by incongruous juxtapositions. This is the result of the artists finding inspiration in their surroundings and making do with what is available.

The work of these artists is always ongoing and improvisational, and they are inspired to construct and embellish by virtue of their previous successes in these very acts. Their creations are generally monumental in scale or in number of components and are intended to be viewed and experienced as a whole, rather than as a grouping of discrete parts. They owe less allegiance to popular, folk, or mainstream art traditions and the wish to produce anything marketable than they do to personal and cultural experiences and the desire for creative expression.

“I wanted to break down the compartmentalization of genres and reveal how these artists fuse their creations with daily existence in a way generally unmatched in the art world,” said Hernández. “The sites show complete commitment to the work and serve as a self-reflection of the maker’s life and concerns.” Artist José María Garrido, for example, worked as a fisherman for twenty years until a close friend was dragged overboard to his death during a storm. From that moment on Garrido never set sail again, and decided instead to pay homage to his friend and the sea by creating *Museo del Mar* – a monumental museum structure he fashioned in the shape of ship. Working every day, Garrido covered the walls of the museum with eighty-thousand sea-snail shells, photographs of old ships, signs bearing maritime proverbs, and objects gathered from beaches.



**Left:** José María Garrido (1925-2011). Rooftop terrace, *Museo del Mar*, with protest signs. Photo: Jo Farb Hernández, March 2009  
**Right:** Josep Pujiula i Vila (b. 1937). Interior spaces within labyrinthine structure, *The Labyrinths and Cabins of Argelaguer*  
Photo: Jo Farb Hernández, June 2007

Other featured artists include Josep Pujiula, renowned internationally for his woven wooden towers and labyrinths, and Francisco González Gragera, whose *Capricho de Cotrina* is an outstanding example of architectural art brut. These artist-builders have typically been discussed solely with reference to “outsider art.” Many of them, however, grapple with some of the same formalist, conceptual, and aesthetic issues that any academically trained artist confronts, despite their characteristic isolation from the contemporary art world. Most of them build on or within their own immediate and personal spaces, whether homes, gardens, or farms. The environments they create become a visual cradle-to-grave accounting of how their creators have spent their lives and what was important to them.

These sites are neither completely comprehensible nor clearly viewable from a single perspective. What may at first seem rather chaotic will often evolve—after several viewings from multiple perspectives—into a patterned, rhythmic milieu that is akin to gestures found in improvisational jazz. The creative process of these artists is always evolving and wildly imaginative.

### **Curator**

The exhibition is curated by Jo Farb Hernández, director of the Thompson Art Gallery at San José State University and of the SPACES archives. She is also the author of the accompanying volume *Singular Spaces*, which presents case studies of forty-five Spanish environmental artists and their work (including the eight featured in this exhibition), contextualized with historical and theoretical references to art history, anthropology, architecture, Spanish area studies, and folklore. The book *Singular Spaces* will be available for purchase in the Fowler Store.

### **Public Programs**

Saturday, April 11, 1–4 pm

Home is Where the Art Is

Kids in the Courtyard

Whether it's the towering mosaics of Watts Towers or the stained glass of Echo Park's "Randy Land," Los Angeles is filled with inventive architecture. In this special Saturday program, explore the photographs of fantastically decorated homes from Spain in the exhibition *Singular Spaces* and consider the architectural creativity in your neighborhood. Then contribute to a group fort-building project using recycled materials in the Fowler Courtyard, and create a colorful wind chime to liven up your own home.

Thursday, April 16, 6 pm

UCLA Guitarists present Spanish Music

Fowler Out Loud

Directed by guitar professor Peter Yates, guitarists Hanna Yocute, Juan Rivera, Tung Vu, Adam Hakim, and Joan Greenwald will present a program of Spanish music, including solo and ensemble works by Tarrega, Granados, and Falla. This recital of remarkable music from Spain coincides with the exhibition *Singular Spaces: From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art Environments*. Following the concert, hear curator and photographer Jo Farb Hernández discuss the works on view in *Singular Spaces* at the Fowler OutSpoken Lecture at 7:30 pm.

Thursday, April 16, 7:30 pm

Jo Farb Hernández on Extraordinary Spanish Art Environments

Fowler OutSpoken Lecture

*Singular Spaces* curator Jo Farb Hernández will discuss her photographic survey of the elaborate fanciful art environments and idiosyncratic sculptures of self-taught Spanish artists. Hernández, who is a professor at San Jose State University and Director of the University's Thompson Art Gallery, spent close to fourteen years researching this project and writing the almost 1200-page

book complementing the exhibition. A 6 pm concert of Spanish guitar music and light refreshments precedes the talk.

Sunday, June 21, 3 pm

Duende Flamenco

Summer Concerts on the Green

Summer Concerts on the Green kicks off with a spectacular summer solstice performance by Duende Flamenco. The sounds of guitar music and pounding flamenco dance steps in the amphitheater will transport you to sunny Spain as you take in images of fantastical art environments in the exhibition *Singular Spaces*. Much like the varied inspiration of the Spanish art sites, flamenco developed from Romani, Moorish, and Andalusian artistic traditions. Duende Flamenco will surely bring the fire of guitar, the excitement of percussion, and the beauty and passion of dance. Grab a picnic, your sunscreen, and your friends and family for this sizzling concert.

### **Support**

*Singular Spaces: From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art Environments* is organized and circulated by the Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery in the Department of Art and Art History at San José State University, San Jose, California. The exhibition was made possible thanks to a generous grant from the Natalie and James Thompson Endowment. Additional funds for the accompanying book were provided by SPACES – Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments, Katie and Drew Gibson, the Robert and Florence Slinger Fund at the Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, and an anonymous donor. The Los Angeles presentation was sponsored in part by Evelyn Meyer.

**The Fowler Museum at UCLA** is one of the country's most respected institutions devoted to exploring the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$12 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361 or visit [fowler.ucla.edu](http://fowler.ucla.edu).