

Room 3

Pop Politics

Pop tends to be associated with a kind of deadpan humour distanced from overt social commentary, but the works in this room demonstrate its capacity to address political themes head-on. Iconic images are subverted and commercial products are yanked from their idealised apolitical plane and forced into relation with world events and social injustices.

Pop art's flourishing coincided with the Vietnam War and artists across the world responded to it in their work, often focusing critically on America's role in the conflict. Images of consumer goods or the seductive visual language of advertising are juxtaposed with symbols or scenes of violence relating to the Second World War as well as contemporary conflicts. Artists addressing civil rights abuses within their own countries sometimes adopted more oblique strategies; the apparently banal fly-swatter in Marcello Nitsche's **Kill Fly** is a reference to the Brazilian military dictatorship, for example.

Wall labels

Clockwise from right of wall text

Jerzy Ryszard 'Jurry' Zieliński 1943–1980

Born and worked Poland

The Smile, or Thirty Years, Ha, Ha, Ha

Uśmiech, Czyli 'Trzydziesti' – lac. 'Cha Cha Cha'

1974

Oil paint on canvas

This painting of a mouth sewn shut subverts official iconography in a critical take on Polish society. Zieliński appropriates the XXX symbol representing the thirtieth anniversary of the People's Republic of Poland in 1974, which was used on postage stamps, coins, public monuments and posters. The stitched-together lips with their ironic smile suggest the interplay between propaganda and enforced silence.

Piotr Nowicki Collection, Courtesy of Polish Modern Art Foundation, Warsaw. X50931

Joan Rabascall 1935

Born Spain, works France

Atomic Kiss

1968

Acrylic paint on canvas

Rabascall has said, '**Atomic Kiss** reflects the year 1968. It was the year of student protests from Berkeley to Berlin, via Paris. The refusal of Vietnam War, the threat of a possible world war...'. The work can be seen as his response to both the politics of the time and the bombardment of imagery from the mass media. He aimed to provoke new interpretations of widely circulated images through juxtaposition, as here with a Hollywood-inspired female mouth superimposed onto an atomic explosion to create a work which captures the ambiguities and contradictions of American consumerist society.

MACBA Collection. Barcelona City Council Fund. X51029

Antonio Dias 1944

Born Brazil, works Brazil and Italy

Note on the Unforeseen Death

Nota sobre a morte imprevista

1965

Acrylic paint on wood, padded fabric, Plexiglass and Duratex

Note on the Unforeseen Death presents a parody of the contemporary political situation, juxtaposing cartoonish images of nuclear clouds, toxic gases and soldiers with a realistic bloodstain held in the soft shrine at its centre.

As Dias recalls, 'A quick look at my early works reveals my preoccupation with issues such as personal and urban violence, explicit sex, censorship, the police state and nuclear war, in short all the topics that I experienced on a daily basis while living in Brazil'.

Collection of the artist. X50821



Joe Overstreet 1933

Born and works USA

The New Jemima

1964, 1970

Acrylic paint on fabric over plywood construction

Overstreet reimagines the stereotypical image of Aunt Jemima, the face of an American pancake mix brand. The Aunt Jemima character was a development of the 'mammy' figure from minstrel shows: the black servant who happily cooks, cleans and looks after the children for a white family. Here she becomes a symbol of black pride, ready to fight for African-Americans' rights as equal citizens. Overstreet made this version of the work for a 1971 exhibition promoting the de-segregation of Rice University in Texas.

The Menil Collection, Houston. X53637



Bernard Rancillac 1931

Born and works France

At Last, a Silhouette Slimmed to the Waist

Enfin silhouette affinée jusqu'à la taille

1966

Vinyl paint on canvas

This painting can be hung either way, emphasising one of the two juxtaposed images: US soldiers plunging a Viet Cong prisoner head-first up to the waist into a cauldron of water or a corset promotion. Mimicking the relationship between images in newspapers and magazines in which photographs of warfare abut advertisements, this work seeks to show the flip-side of glossy American consumer society.

Musée de Grenoble. X50876

Ulrike Ottinger 1942
Born and works Germany

God of War

Dieu de guerre

1967–8

Acrylic paint on wood

Best known for her avant-garde films, Ottinger lived in Paris from 1962 to 1968 creating paintings influenced by pop art. In this triptych she combines the pop aesthetics of the pinball machine and the traditional artistic genre of religious altar painting, including contemporary images referencing the Vietnam War and political tensions in France. The work implies that commodities have become modern objects of worship and suggests the idea of war as a game, in which players score points by striking various targets.

Collection of the artist. X51074



Kiki Kogelnik 1935–1997

Born Austria, worked Austria, USA

Bombs in Love

1962

Mixed media with Plexiglas and
acrylic paint on bomb casings

Turning away from European abstraction and the Viennese avant-garde art scene, Kogelnik moved to New York in 1962, where she met American pop artists including Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg. **Bombs in Love** is made of two US Army bomb casings painted in the exuberant colours associated with the 'Peace & Love' generation.

Kiki Kogelnik Foundation Vienna / New York. X51070

Marcello Nitsche 1942

Born and works Brazil

I Want You

Eu quero voce

1966

Cotton padded plastic and acrylic paint on PVC

I Want You appropriates the USA's military recruitment campaign's slogan ('I want you for the US army') and pointing finger – also used by Roy Lichtenstein earlier in the decade. By adding a three-dimensional drop of blood, Nitsche hijacks the image's original meaning, invoking the USA's cultural and political imperialism and the attendant violence. By 1966 the USA was highly invested in the Vietnam War, and just two years earlier it had largely subsidised a coup in Brazil leading to a military dictatorship.

Colecao Museu de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo, Fundo para aquisicao de obras para o acervo MAM – Pirelli. X50838



Joav BarEl 1933–1977

Born and worked Israel

Kennedy Assassination

1968

Acrylic paint on canvas

This depiction of John F. Kennedy's assassination is partially based on a diagram associated with the 'magic bullet theory'. This idea – that the same bullet that passed through the US president's body also injured the Texas Governor riding in the same limousine – was central to the debates around whether gunman Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. Joav BarEl was a multidisciplinary artist, art critic, writer and lecturer. His works from this period were strongly influenced by American pop art. When it was first exhibited in Tel Aviv, **Kennedy Assassination** was criticised for being overtly political.

Collection Anke Kempkes, BROADWAY 1602, New York

X54167



Keiichi Tanaami 1936

Born and works Japan

Crayon Angel

1975

Animation film

Running time: 2 min 50 sec

Keiichi Tanaami's childhood was marked by the chaos of the Second World War. Images of roaring American aeroplanes, searchlights, bombs and fleeing masses were to become his core visual vocabulary. **Crayon Angel** comments on the American invasion of Japan both in military and cultural terms. The fast-paced video combines psychedelic characters with black and white photographs of Japanese families, and footage tinted ominously orange, the colour of firebombing in his memory.

Courtesy of the artist and NANZUKA. X56344

Teresinha Soares 1927

Born and works Brazil

So Many Men Die and I Am Here So Lonely

(from the series **Vietnam**)

Morrem tantos homens e eu aqui tão só

Die Wearing the Legitimate Espadrille

(from the series **Vietnam**)

Morra usando a legítima alpargata

1969

Mixed media

In these three-dimensional panels mimicking television sets Soares juxtaposes war and love, both filtered through the mass media's alienating effects. Sexualised human silhouettes are interspersed among fragmented images of warfare. Although these two works belong to a series called 'Vietnam', they also evoke the violence perpetrated under Brazil's military dictatorship.

Collection Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG).

X50855 Collection of the artist. X50858.

Raimo Reinikainen 1939

Born and works Finland

Sketch 1 for the U.S. Flag

1966

Sketch 2 for the U.S. Flag

1966

Sketch 3 for the U.S. Flag

1966

Sketch 4 for the U.S. Flag

1966

Luonnos 1. – 4. Yhdysvaltain lipuksi

Oil paint on paper with newspaper, collage

Replacing the American flag's red and white stripes with a rainbow of bright and intense colours, and its stars with newspaper photographs of the Vietnam War, Reinikainen's works were intended as a condemnation of the United States' role in the conflict. 'I was appalled at how the richest country on the planet was trying to ravage one of the world's poorest countries,' he has commented. 'These four paintings were my protest against the war.'

The Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki, Finland. X55899. Helsinki Art Museum.

X55901, X55902

Turku Art Museum. X55903

Colin Self 1941

Born and works UK

Leopardskin Nuclear Bomber No. 2

1963

Wood, aluminium, steel and fabric

Self was one of the first British artists to engage with the nuclear threat of the Cold War. His series of **Nuclear Bombers**, made while he was still a student, equate animals' predatory instincts with male aggression and sexual violence. The fashionable fake fur used to cover this phallic object may also be symbolic of the shallow artifice of consumer society.

Tate Collection. Purchased 1993. T06695

Rafael Canogar 1935
Born and works Spain
The Punishment
El castigo
1969
Polyester and wood

The Punishment represents a man being beaten by a policeman, a familiar scene in the late 1960s in Francoist Spain. The disturbing vignette, which physically invades the viewer's space, was interpreted by Canogar's contemporaries as a call to engage with the social unrest that defined this turbulent period. 'My need for truthfulness drew me to the use of authentic clothes in which to dress my characters, frozen and hardened with glass fibre and polyester,' Canogar recalls. 'At times they resembled empty carcasses... dehumanised, as a way to underline their objective condition.'

Private collection. X54153

Marcello Nitsche 1942

Born and works Brazil

Kill Fly

Mata mosca

1967

Plastic pipe, paint on polystyrene and paint
on fiberglass and resin

Following the Brazilian military coup in 1964, Nitsche's works began to address political themes. This giant papier-mâché hand holding a fly swatter was, according to the artist, 'a reference to dictatorship; it was the camouflaged way I found to speak out against the military regime.'

Roger Wright Collection, on long-term loan to the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo. X53769

Equipo Realidad

Joan Cardells 1948

Born and works Spain

Jorge Ballester 1941–2014

Born and worked Spain

Divine Proportion

La divina proporción

1967

Acrylic paint on board

Equipo Realidad (Group Reality) was formed by Cardells and Ballester in 1966 with the mandate to serve society through art. From the outset they confronted the themes of war, politics, consumerism, femininity and the role of art.

The Divine Proportion revisits Leonardo da Vinci's iconic Vitruvian Man. By substituting the anatomical study with the depiction of a US soldier, Equipo Realidad warn against the threat of American cultural and economic imperialism – manifested in Spain by the neoliberal policies of Francisco Franco's administration.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X51045

