

Travessera de Gràcia / Gran de Gràcia, 1979

Barcelona, 1978-1997... MANOLO LAGUILLO

2 March - 6 May 2007

This exhibition presents at a substantial part of the work of Manolo Laguillo (Madrid, 1953), the one that focuses on representation of Barcelona. And he does so from the hypothesis of the close relation between his work and the construction of a photographic image of the city in the eighties. A crucial time for the urban history of this city, with the 1992 Olympic Games as catalyst for a major transformation. Although all Laguillo's photographic activity has to do with representation of the urban environment, it is his series about Barcelona and its metropolitan area that make it possible to survey his work over time.

MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

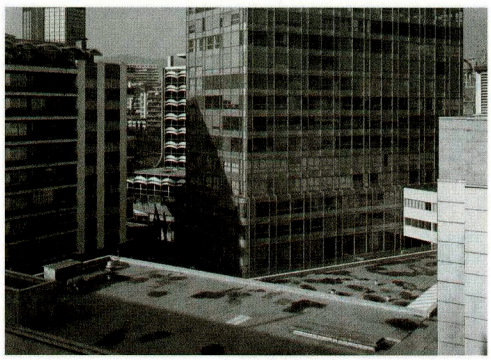
The exhibition proposes an approach that maintains the tension between the construction of a subjectivity through the author's work on the one hand and the construction of a historical representation of the city on the other. This is indeed a characteristic tension of the photographic document in modernity.

Manolo Laguillo began to take photographs in Barcelona in 1978 with a large format camera. He was renewing an urban documentary practice that updated the model of street photography typical of humanist reportage, established in the mid 20th century through the work of authors such as William Klein or Xavier Miserachs. Laguillo adopted a dry, straight style, faithful to the Walker Evans model, favouring frontal shots and simple, clear geometries. A style that in essence was not far from the descriptive conventions of architecture photography and thus linked up more than that of any of his contemporaries in Spain with the codes and sensibility of the new topography.

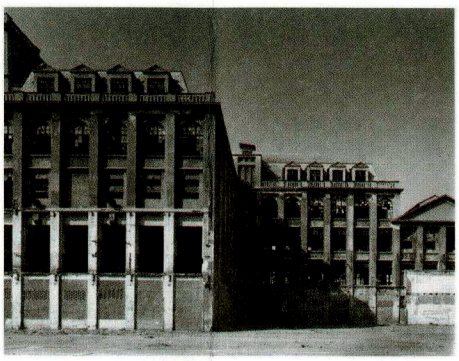
raphers, replacing the earlier one established by Català-Roca. Proof of that is that he soon received commissions from architects in Barcelona to document works. His work for Josep Lluís Mateo, Josep Llinàs and Eduard Bru through the second half of the eighties would be particularly significant.

Laguillo is also a pioneer in photographing the outskirts of the city. His work over the period 1979-1983 constitutes a new cartography of Barcelona, where the dominant clichés of the centre-periphery opposition are beginning to change. His photographs show the dormitory areas of the Besòs, the industrial zones of Poblenou, the surroundings of the port area, the back yards of the Ensanche, in short, the places which had historically been on the fringe of representations of the city. He produces laconic, descriptive, depopulated images with a contained tone of melancholy, creating an image of Barcelona with a notable historical sense, a traumatised city emerging from a dictatorship.

His attention to the residual, peripheral zones, to the anarchic accumulations of disparate architectural elements is not



Rear Francesc Macià Square, 1980



Cátex-Can Felipa, Poblenou, 1984



Diagonal, 1988



Vall d'Hebron Olimpic Area, 1990



Gran Via Surroundings, 1994

The new topography was an international photographic trend that catalysed in the mid seventies from a famous exhibition which gave it its name: *New Topographics. Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, which contained photographs by photographers like Robert Adams, Bernd and Hilla Becher and Stephen Shore, and was presented at the George Eastman House in Rochester in 1975. Its main feature was a determination to update the documentary style by assimilating the serial practices of conceptualism and, at the same time, to make a new reading of the tradition of topographic and geological photography of the explorations of the American West in the 19th century. The characteristic of this new topographic documentary was its attention to urban processes and it did not exclude critical views of the exploitation and destruction of natural environments derived from the sprawling urban development typical of the great American metropolises.

His persistence with this descriptive documentary style for over two decades makes Laguillo a reference for the urban documentary, particularly in Barcelona. His work is inseparable from representation of the city and its transformations and set a standard that would be a local model for architecture photog-

confined to a celebration of the picturesque qualities of urban decadence; it also has a critical value. In his images ruin and nostalgia formalise a latent, still not exhausted, historical potential in the discarded options and the demand for a second chance for everything which the course of dominant history tends to consign to oblivion.

Laguillo's work on zones that are empty, obsolete, unproductive or in transformation and on the intermediate phases of incorporation into metropolitan life and urban design point to a complex perception of the urban model of Barcelona, and a premature intuition of the model of the sprawling city, which takes the shape of his observation of the boundaries of the urban and the ambiguous borders between city and country. This a gradually generalised perception that goes with the period of intense urban transformation of the eighties and nineties. In this way he constructs a poetics of the 'waste land', which in the nineties would be theorised by authors such as Marc Augé, with his notion of 'non-places', and Ignasi de Solà-Morales, who in 1995 introduced the category of 'terrain vague' to designate the uncertain urban areas and as a historical symptom of the loss of the great modern town-planning

models. These authors provide a theoretical framework for these new poetics of the periphery, symptomatic of an ambivalence between attraction and rejection of what can be perceived in the change of decade and the possible transformation of this historic model of the dense, compact city, characteristic of Barcelona.

Laguillo persisted in a task of documenting the city during the transformation of the eighties from the perspective of recording the everyday and invisible, what disappears and what is forgotten, while photographing key places of the Olympic rebuilding, both before the change took place, such as Montjuïc Stadium, the Diagonal or the port and during and after the great works, such as Vall d'Hebron or the construction of road infrastructures in the Collserola zone.

The exhibition is divided into two areas. The first begins with Laguillo's initial work between 1978 and 1983 and ends with a series done in the zone on the border of L'Hospitalet in 1997, by way of the key moments of the Olympic transformation from the second half of the eighties. A second room presents a new work, done with digital technology, which documents a series of photographic explorations of the present outskirts of the city beyond the natural boundaries of the metropolitan area, the Llobregat and Besos valleys as far as the tops of the Collserola sierra. In this way the exhibition reconstructs the great process of transformation of the eighties, which began on a small scale with the discourse of the "recovery of Barcelona" proposed by Oriol Bohigas and culminated in the next decade by overflowing the municipal boundaries.

ACTIVITY AROUND THE EXHIBITION

Course
The Photographic Construction of Barcelona
From March to June 2007
Directed by **Jorge Ribalta** and **Joan Roca**
Inscriptions: Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat, Casa de l'Ardiaca, tel. 93 318 11 95, from 10 am to 2 pm
Limited number of seats

GUIDED TOURS

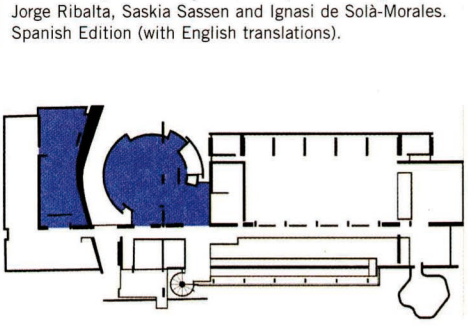
(Included in the entrance fee)

Weekdays and Saturdays at 6 pm
Sundays and public holidays at 12 pm
Available in **English** on Mondays

PUBLICATION

Barcelona, 1978-1997... MANOLO LAGUILLO.
Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona.
With texts by Jean-François Chevrier, Manolo Laguillo, Jorge Ribalta, Saskia Sassen and Ignasi de Solà-Morales.
Spanish Edition (with English translations).

NIVELL 1



Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

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www.macba.es

Museum Opening Hours
Daily, 11 am - 7.30 pm
Saturdays, 10 am - 8 pm
Sundays and public holidays, 10 am - 3 pm
Tuesdays, closed
Mondays, opened

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