

Muntadas & M HKA

In 1976 Antoni Muntadas exhibited at the Venice Biennale, in a show in the Italian Pavilion that brought together the then Spanish avant-garde. Afterwards, at the request of Flor Bex, former director of the ICC and founder of the M HKA, he travelled directly to Antwerp for his solo exhibition at the ICC. The exhibition took up four rooms, three of which each displayed a large installation while the fourth showed smaller works and documentary material. Thirty-five years later two of the three key works in this exhibition were incorporated into the M HKA collection together with a number of other recent acquisitions. This was only possible because many of the components of the exhibition had been carefully preserved in the ICC's exhibition archives, which were later transferred to the M HKA. In around 2005 these pieces were rediscovered by the then relatively new director Bart De Baere, who immediately recognised their value. This heralded the beginning of their journey out of the archives and into the collection. Eventually in 2012 final discussions were held with Antoni Muntadas about the purchase and reinstallation of these pieces, during which he provided additional information about the other smaller works that had been left behind so that they too could be properly described and documented.

The first piece from the 1976 exhibition, *N/S/E/O*, is a key symbolic installation that Muntadas created for the Venice Biennale and exhibited again in Antwerp. It shows the then fragmented world that found itself right in the middle of the Cold War. Spain is highlighted on a world map, which is positioned on the one hand between the USA and the former USSR, and on the other between good and evil represented by Christ and the Devil.

The second piece that was displayed in the ICC is the vital media piece *Emission/Reception*, a slide installation that was put together from the slides in the ICC archives and which had already been displayed several times in the meantime. It shows images of TV programmes along with the corresponding photographs of people watching them, alone or in groups, in public or private. With the focus on media and the image, public and private, the oeuvre embodies many of Muntadas' core concepts, making it an essential component of the collection of this artist's work that the M HKA is gradually putting together.

Even before the pieces were rediscovered in the archives, the museum had been gradually compiling a collection of Antoni Muntadas' artists' publications, a medium that was always an important part of his artistic production. The artist himself states that artists' books are an ideal and quick way to reach people, with the added bonus that you can monitor the content yourself. Hence the library houses an ever-growing collection of more than thirty artists' publications that he has written, which together paint a very rich and primarily artistic portrait.

As part of his solo exhibition in 2012, the M HKA also participated in the long-running, global project *On Translation: Warning*. We didn't just create our own Flemish translation of the slogan *Warning: perception requires involvement*, we also distributed it in Flanders as a sticker so that the same sentence in Dutch could also remind people of their responsibility when interpreting and filtering images, which this time mainly focuses on the local election campaigns that will dominate the streets in the autumn of 2012 as well as our TV screens, given that the battle for Barack Obama's second presidential term will be settled in November 2012.