



MEADOWS MUSEUM
SMU · DALLAS

**MEADOWS MUSEUM TO PRESENT IGNASI ABALLÍ EXHIBITION
AHEAD OF 2022 VENICE BIENNALE PRESENTATION**

**Aballí, who is representing Spain in the 2022 Venice Biennale,
will visit Dallas in early March**

DALLAS (SMU)—November 22, 2021— The Meadows Museum, SMU, will present an exhibition of work by the Spanish conceptual artist Ignasi Aballí (b. 1958), opening on March 6, 2022, ahead of his solo presentation at the Spanish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale. Aballí is the first Spanish artist to visit Dallas and exhibit work at the museum as part of the *MAS: Meadows/ARCO Artist Spotlight* program. Established in 2019, *MAS* is a six-year partnership between the Meadows Museum and Fundación ARCO, the leading organization behind Spain's premier contemporary art fair, ARCOmadrid. *MAS* selects one contemporary Spanish artist with limited recognition in the U.S. biennially to present their work at the Meadows Museum. Aballí, who was chosen to represent Spain at the 59th Venice Biennale starting in April, will visit Dallas in early March for the installation and to participate in educational programming designed to engage SMU and the broader Dallas community. The exhibition of Aballí's work will be on view in the Virginia Meadows Galleries from March 6 through June 26, 2022.

Aballí is a conceptual artist whose multimedia work often incorporates unusual materials that challenge the viewer's perception of reality while raising questions about transience and permanence. The Barcelona-based artist was the focus of a survey exhibition at Madrid's Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 2015–16. Throughout his career, he has frequently made deliberate use of overlooked or obsolete materials, such as banknotes that have been removed from circulation, dried leaves, or dust to explore themes such as ephemerality and absence.

His series *Palabras Vacías (Empty Words)* (2020), which will be on view at the Meadows, confronts the viewer with 27 individual, galvanized iron plates hung at eye level. Cut into the metal plates are words such as "INVISIBLE" and "ABANDONED"—and other adjectives that reference being invisible or forgotten—thereby imbuing the negative space with meaning; what he refers to (both literally and figuratively) as "empty words." The resulting tension between the form and meaning of the words creates a dialogue between language and image, between signified and signifier. Confronted by empty space, the viewer is, in a way, seeing the meaning of the words rather than the words themselves. *Palabras Vacías (Empty Words)* is hung differently each time it is exhibited, and the artist himself will work with museum staff to oversee the installation in the Meadows' galleries when he is on site in early March.

In many of his installations, Aballí makes use of connections with literature; *Palabras Vacías* suggests the work of Samuel Beckett or James Joyce, both of whom used experimental methods of writing to question how text signifies meaning. “Most of us live in a completely visual world in which nearly everything is communicated through images,” stated Aballí, who went on to add “I am interested in exploring the relationship between words and images in order to propose a new understanding between what we see and what we describe.” Aballí uses words and everyday language with the intention of “bestowing upon these words the power of going beyond their strict meaning, thus transforming them into a starting point to inspire reflection and questions our intense relationship with images and the use we make of them. When the everyday is explored, a suggestive world is discovered, one full of possibilities.”

Aballí was selected for *MAS* through a juried process involving representatives from both Fundación ARCO and the Meadows Museum. Fundación ARCO assembled a nominating committee, comprised of two collectors and two directors of institutions dedicated to contemporary art in Spain, who proposed four Spanish contemporary artists for participation in the program, and presented a portfolio of the semifinalists’ work to the Meadows Museum selection committee. The Meadows Museum’s committee—which included members of the museum’s curatorial staff, three collectors from the Meadows Museum Advisory Council, and an esteemed curator from a peer museum—then reviewed the portfolios of the four semifinalists the four artists and selected Aballí as the inaugural artist for the *MAS* program. The next *MAS* artist will be decided in early 2022.

Following the opening of his exhibition at the Meadows Museum, Aballí will represent Spain in the Spanish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, where the artist will present an immersive, site-specific installation titled *Corrección (Correction)*. Aballí’s architectural intervention will create new spaces within the Spanish Pavilion, transforming the existing space with new rooms, doors, and corridors, some of which will lead to nowhere. The Biennale is scheduled to take place in Venice from April 23 to November 27, 2022.

Funding for this initiative has been provided by the Meadows Museum thanks to a generous gift from The Meadows Foundation.

About the Meadows Museum

The Meadows Museum is the leading U.S. institution focused on the study and presentation of the art of Spain. In 1962, Dallas businessman and philanthropist Algur H. Meadows donated his private collection of Spanish paintings, as well as funds to start a museum, to Southern Methodist University. The museum opened to the public in 1965, marking the first step in fulfilling Meadows’s vision to create “a small Prado for Texas.” Today, the Meadows is home to one of the largest and most comprehensive

collections of Spanish art outside of Spain. The collection spans from the 10th to the 21st centuries and includes medieval objects, Renaissance and Baroque sculptures, and major paintings by Golden Age and modern masters.

About Fundación ARCO

Fundación ARCO, established in 1987, aims to promote the collection, research and dissemination of contemporary art, as well as the publication, training and teaching of artistic trends and techniques, especially those relating to modern manifestations of contemporary art. The brainchild of IFEMA (Institución Ferial de Madrid) and made up of its consortium members— Madrid City Council, Madrid Regional Council, Fundación Montemadrid and the Madrid Chamber of Commerce—it is a structure that complements the informative nature of the International Contemporary Art Fair, ARCOMadrid.

Since its inception, Fundación ARCO has been actively involved in the development of collecting in Spain, modernizing it and opening it up to new possibilities beyond the traditional domestic market. Fundación ARCO has also played a role in the professionalization of collecting by emphasizing the importance of leveraging the knowledge of curators and experts in the collecting process. Under those same premises, its own Colección Fundación ARCO brings together works acquired at each presentation of ARCOMadrid, and has always benefited from the advice of professionals from the art world, including: Edy de Wilde; Gloria Moure; Jan Debbaut; Dan Cameron; Iwona Blazwick; María de Corral; Chus Martínez; Sabine Brietwieser; José Guirao; María Inés Rodríguez; Adriano Pedrosa; Ferrán Barenblit; Miguel von Hafe Pérez; Vincent Honoré; and Manuel Segade, director of the CA2M-Centro de Arte dos de Mayo de Móstoles (Comunidad de Madrid), where the Collection has been on loan since 2012. The Collection, with more than 300 pieces, is an active part of the CA2M program, with works present in different thematic exhibitions.

In addition, throughout the year Fundación ARCO carries out various activities and actions aimed at promoting and strengthening collecting and the local contemporary art market: ARCO Gallery Walks; #mecomprounaobra; First Collectors; Collecting Forum. For more information visit fundacionarco.com.

About Ignasi Aballí

Born in Barcelona in 1958, Aballí has had solo exhibitions of his work in galleries and public institutions, both national and international, since 1990, including shows at Espacio Uno, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, 2002); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Macba, Barcelona 2005); Fundação Serralves (Porto, Portugal, 2006); IKON Gallery (Birmingham, United Kingdom, 2006), ZKM (Karlsruhe, Germany, 2006); Today Art Museum (Beijing, China, 2009); Artium Museum (Vitoria, Spain, 2012); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain, 2015);

Fundación Joan Miró (Barcelona, Spain, 2016); and the Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Bogotá, Colombia, 2017). In addition to being chosen to represent Spain the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022 he has participated previously in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), as well as the Sharjah Biennial 8 (United Arab Emirates, 2007), the XI Sidney Biennial, (1998), the 4th Guangzhou Triennial (2012) and the 13th Cuenca Biennial (Ecuador, 2016). Aballí was awarded the Premio Nacional de Arte Gráfico in 2007 and the Premio Joan Miró in 2015. He continues to live and work in Barcelona and exhibits regularly at the galleries Estrany de la Mota (Barcelona), Elba Benítez (Madrid), Meessen de Clercq (Brussels), Proyecto Paralelo (Mexico City) and Nordenhake (Berlin). For more information visit ignasiaballi.net.

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