



Bergé y Cía., Madrid, Spain

“Our collection nurtures emerging artists, who reflect contemporary reality and imagine a future, and who also reference the past, the origins of art. These are the same ideas that have shaped our company for more than 140 years, always with an eye to the future.”

Pedro Enciso Bergé, Vice Chairman, Bergé y Cía.

JOHN BALDESSARI  
Hierarchy (With Predator): Hikers/Argument/Bus, 1990  
Color photograph, plastic painting and oil painting, 360 x 202 cm  
(at Headquarters Bergé y Cía., Madrid)

**Year of Foundation** / late 1980s

**Curator** / María Aguilera Aranaz

**Locations** / Headquarters, other office in Madrid and Bodega Castillo de Cuzcurruta in La Rioja

**Size of Collection** / 98 artists, 112 works

**Key Artists** / BRUCE NAUMAN, JOHN BALDESSARI, GERHARD RICHTER, ED RUSCHA, JONATHAN BOROFKY, JANNIS KOUNELLIS, TONY CRAGG, PIERRE HUYGHE, CARL ANDRÉ, ÁNGELA DE LA CRUZ et al.

**Focus** / International Contemporary Art

**Publications** / Colección Bergé en Cuatrecasas Gonçalves Pereira (2013); Colección Bergé. Adquisiciones 2007-2008 (2009); Colección Bergé (2007)

**Website** / www.bergeycia.es

Established in Bilbao in 1870 and now in its fifth generation, Bergé y Cía. is one of Spain's oldest and largest corporations in private hands, boasting a staff of over 3,700 employees and present not only in Spain, but also in the neighbouring countries of Portugal and France, the Latin American countries of Chile, Perú, Argentina and Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as in Canada and Yemen. Although its roots are founded in harbour-related activities, the company is now also active in the fields of environmentally friendly energy sources and environmental protection, as well as transport, new technologies, financial services, insurance brokerage and winemaking.

Bergé began collecting international contemporary art in the late 1980s. Very few Spanish companies were acquiring contemporary art at the time – and barely any of them focused on international contemporary art, opting instead to foster the then still greatly neglected local Spanish art scene. For Bergé, however, the most important thing was to have an open mind to the global art scene when collecting pieces. Equally important was the ideal that collecting challenging contemporary art meant securing a cultural legacy for future generations – a concept based on Bergé's own long corporate history and family tradition.

From the beginning, an acquisition committee headed by the Vice Chairman of the company, Pedro Enciso Bergé – the “soul of the collection” – was created with the advice and support of well-known art experts, such as the New York-based gallery owner Brooke Alexander, the London-based art consultant Lotta Hammer, and especially their internationally highly respected Spanish colleague Pepe Cobo, seen by many internally and externally as the “driving force behind the Colección Bergé.”

With just over 110 works by 98 artists, the Colección Bergé is still relatively small compared with many other corporate collections presented in this volume,

but it also serves as clear evidence that quality is far more important than quantity and that a well-curated collection can be far more effective than a haphazardly compiled amassment of big names or decorative objects. Managed and curated by the art historian María Aguilera Aranaz, the collection encompasses practically all media available to contemporary artists and includes works by some of the most important protagonists of post-modern art since the 1960s, such as, among others, RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER, JOHN BALDESSARI, BRUCE NAUMAN, GERHARD RICHTER, ED RUSCHA and SUSANA SOLANO. Works by these artists are cleverly juxtaposed with those of a younger generation of international talents, such as ADAM CHODZKO, MARTIN CREED, ÁNGELA DE LA CRUZ, PIERRE HUYGHE, JAIME PITARCH, ANRI SALA, DAVID SHRIGLEY, JUAN MUÑOZ and GRAZIA TODERI.

The collection has an itinerant purpose and currently is distributed across three locations: The principal venue is in the new headquarters of the company, a five storey building from the 19th century located in the centre of Madrid, where most of the works are now exhibited and inhabit the work space together with the employees. An important part of the collection is also on view in the offices in Madrid of one of the most important Spanish law firms, Cuatrecasas Gonçalves Pereira, of whom Bergé has been a close client for three generations. The third venue is the Cuzcurruta bodega in La Rioja in the north of Spain – an ancient winery with a medieval castle from the 14th-century surrounded by old vineyards that produces two select wines. Here, a sample of the collection is exhibited in the gardens and inside the bodega itself.

Bergé sets extremely high standards when it comes to corporate collecting – especially in the fields of sculpture and video art. Collecting sculpture is quite daring for any collection, private or corporate, because of the demands it makes on physical space, and video



EVA ROTHSCCHILD  
The Narrow Way, 2007  
Leather, fabric and metal, 304 x 370 x 62 cm  
(at Headquarters Bergé y Cía., Madrid)



ALLAN MCCOLLUM  
Collection of 90 drawings, n°6, 1988-1990  
Pencil and ink on paper, 530 x 220 cm  
(at Cuatrecasas Gonçalves Pereira office, Madrid)



“Contemporary art measures our reality and reflects everything occurring in the world from the most trivial to the most profound. A traditional company supporting this effort represents great social commitment and invitation to reflection.”

María Aguilera, Curator, Colección Bergé

art, because of the technical issues involved and the demands it makes on the viewer’s time. One prime example of this daring attitude with regard to corporate collecting is the boldly dramatic, large-scale installation by the Dusseldorf-based artist KIRSTIN ARNDT, whose work deals with the complex correlation between work and space. Equally challenging are the numerous video works in the collection, such as “File Cabinet” (2004) by the Scottish artist EUAN MACDONALD, as well as “Sleep” (2000) and “Firestone” (1997) by the Spanish artists DORA GARCÍA and IBON ARANBERRI respectively.

The special charm of the Colección Bergé is the fascinating juxtaposition of conceptually related works by various generations of Spanish and international artists. One of the key figures within the collection is the American artist BRUCE NAUMAN, whose works range from sculpture and installation to video and conceptual art. His seminal piece “Julie Head / Julie, Head, Upside Down, Tongue to Tongue” (1990) – in addition to GERHARD RICHTER’s red “Abstract Painting” from 1991 and TONY CRAGG’s “Stack” from 1989 – is central to the collection concept. The work of the internationally acclaimed Spanish sculptress CRISTINA IGLESIAS, “Untitled No. 389” (1990), makes reference to NAUMAN’s groundbreaking “Corridor” pieces from the late 1960s and early 70s, while MARTIN CREED’s blue neon text piece “Work No. 251: Things” (2001) harks back to NAUMAN’s own early neon text pieces, as well as to JONATHAN BOROFKY’s “Counting (3, 326, 753 – 3, 326, 760)” from 1990, a series

of numbers formed by steel wire, which is also included in the collection.

One of the most important aspects that characterizes the philosophy of the collection is the coherent acquisitions policy. “The intention has never been to acquire great pieces from established artists,” collection curator María Aguilera Aranaz says, “but rather to place faith in contemporary art that is in vogue, young and novel.” Thus, the works by NAUMAN, RICHTER, CRAGG and MUÑOZ, as well as those by CRISTINA IGLESIAS, RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER, JOHN BALDES-SARI, JONATHAN BOROFKY, ALLAN MCCOLLUM and JANNIS KOUNELLIS, were all acquired between 1989 and 1992, when the works themselves were still relatively fresh from the studio and the artists were not as highly valued by the international art market.

Similarly, the works of MARTIN CREED and ÁNGELA DE LA CRUZ were both acquired before they were nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize, or those of DORA GARCÍA and LARA ALMÁRCEGUI before they represented Spain at the Venice Biennale. “This indicates that the spirit of the collection has always been to take risks, to acquire works that reflect our world in the time-liest way, without worrying if the artists are famous or prestigious, and to have a true passion for committed collecting.”



CARL ANDRE  
Manet Sphinges, 1986  
16 equal units of Quincy granite in vertical and horizontal series  
45.72 x 167.64 x 167.64 cm  
(at Bodega Castillo de Cuzcurrita, La Rioja)



GERHARD RICHTER  
Abstraktes Bild (748-5), 1991  
Oil on canvas  
112 x 102 cm