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The exhibition *Arissa. The Shadow and the Photographer 1922-1936* will run from 4th June to 14th September 2014 at Espacio Fundación Telefónica

FUNDACIÓN TELEFÓNICA REVIVES THE PHOTOGRAPHER ANTONI ARISSA, ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED EXPONENTS OF THE NEW VISION IN SPAIN

- This project continues the drive to recover old photographic material, launched by Fundación Telefónica with the company's Photographic Archive and subsequently expanded to include photographers like Luis Ramón Marín, Josep Brangulí and Virxilio Vieitez.
- The exhibition, curated by Rafael Levenfeld and Valentín Vallhonrat, brings together more than 160 black and white photographs in the first retrospective in Spain to be fully devoted to the Catalan photographer Arissa.
- The exhibition will be completed by a series of screenings related to contemporary Spanish photography and an educational programme that includes guided tours, school activities and workshops aimed at teenagers, families and groups with special needs.

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Madrid, 4th June 2014.- Fundación Telefónica is giving us a closer look at Antoni Arissa, one of the most prominent Spanish avant-garde photographers, whose work went practically unnoticed for eight decades. With the exhibition *Arissa. The Shadow and the Photographer 1922-1936*, Espacio Fundación Telefónica will be reappraising this artist and giving him his first photographic retrospective, which can be visited from 4th June to 14th September on the 3rd floor.

The show is part of the PHotoEspaña 2014 Festival and curated by **Valentín Vallhonrat and Rafael Levenfeld**. It consists of **over 160 black and white photographs** that cover Arissa's entire career, arranged into three stylistic groups: Pictorialism, between 1922 and 1928; his evolution towards modern visual solutions up to the early 1930s and the New Vision, from 1930 to 1936, when Arissa was a prime example of avant-garde photography.

The images have been taken from the collections of negatives preserved by Fundación Telefónica and the Institute of Photographic Studies of Catalonia. The exhibition also includes the few print runs made by the artist that have been preserved on paper. This project continues the drive to recover old photographic material, launched by Fundación Telefónica with the company's Photographic Archive and subsequently expanded to include photographers like Luis Ramón Marín, Josep Brangulí and Virxilio Vieitez.

The Beginnings: the Pictorialist Period

Antoni Arissa (Barcelona, 1900-1980) took up photography in the early 1920s, combining his work as a photographer with the family printing business. His beginnings need to be understood within the context of the Pictorialist movement, which emerged in 1890 among photographic associations and societies and sought the recognition of photography as an artistic discipline. During this period, his career coincided with that of other Spanish artists of the time,

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who distanced themselves from documentary photography and joined different artistic movements, from Pre-Raphaelism to Symbolism, ultimately arriving at a precious world full of dreamlike mysteries and atmospheres.

In 1922, Arissa, together with Josep Girabalt and Lluís Batlle founded the Agrupación Fotográfica Saint-Victor (Saint-Victor Photographic Association), one year before the appearance of the Agrupación Fotográfica de Catalunya (Photographic Association of Catalonia), where the photographers of the time were trained. It was in this period, as part of this Association, when he carried out his early work as a Pictorialist photographer and portrayed rural scenes, rustic iconography with previously prepared scenes, literary descriptions of an Arcadia where traditional values endure and images of children who are redolent of the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm or Perrault.

The Evolution Towards the New Vision

In the early 1930s, there was already a glimpse of a new way of understanding his photographic work. Arissa moved towards a modern form of photography, devoid of the ornaments and symbolic references of Pictorialism and closer to the approaches used in Central European photography, which was characterised by composition, shape, line, perspective and lighting that accentuated the qualities and the intention of the photographic objects.

His photographs abandoned the recreation of a nostalgic, aesthetic and literary past. Although the narrative props from his previous stage survived, he now introduced abstract spaces with bright lighting, low angle shots, shadows, new angles and graphic elements. His images, which had previously relied on literary structures, were now conceptual, and his compositions became perfect visual arrangements.

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This change in what and how to photograph was reinforced by several facets of the man, such as his career as a printer-publisher and his knowledge of typography. It was also reinforced by the rise of disciplines such as advertising, where avant-garde photography found its place, with photographers from Arissa's generation such as Pere Català Pic, Emili Godes and Josep Masana. It was also a result of the appearance of new publications that covered stylistic devices from the new photography (*Estudis, D'Ací i d'Allà, Ford* magazine and *Art de la llum*) and articles by Manuel Abril and Salvador Dalí that called for the implementation of new photographic languages.

This was his shift towards photographic conceptualisation, in which he rejected the tenets of Pictorialism and focused his work on little details. Both his family and his own home now became scenes for his work: the house, the garden, hallways, everyday objects and his own daughters were turned into graphic elements. Gradually, this circle widened beyond his family and led him to portray the streets and the port of Barcelona. From this point, any fragment of reality could be the subject of his photographic activity.

Biography of Antoni Arissa

Antoni Arissa Asmarats was born in Barcelona in 1900 to a family of printers. In 1920 he took over the company. At the age of only 22, he received his first award from the magazine *Criterium*; in 1924 he was awarded a prize in the Ateneo Obrero in Gijón; and in 1925 he received the Medal of Honour of Figueras.

He also won several international awards and his work was selected for exhibitions such as the *2nd International Exhibition of Photographic Art of Saint Etienne*, alongside photographers such as Frantisek Drtikol and Jaromír Funke. In 1935, the magazine *Art de la Llum* devoted a special

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issue to Antoni Arissa that coincided with the exhibition at the Exhibition Hall in the Centro Popular Catalanista in Sant Andreu.

After the Spanish Civil War, with the disappearance of media outlets disseminating modernism, Arissa cut back on his artistic activity, and little by little, fell into obscurity. In the early 1990s, the exhibition *Las vanguardias fotográficas en España* (Avant-garde Photography in Spain), included 6 photos by Arissa, thus initiating the process of rediscovering him.

Parallel activities: series of screenings and workshops

Coinciding with the 17th edition of PHotoEspaña, the Festival, in collaboration with Fundación Telefónica, has scheduled *Destellos, deslumbramientos y rupturas* (Sparkles, Glare and Breaks), three days of screenings, coordinated by the festival's artistic director, Alejandro Castellote, focusing on contemporary Spanish photography. The photography and artists will be offering a critical look at the situation in Spain within the scenario of the economic crisis, showcasing the new hybrid styles that are taking centre stage in the work done by new visual artists.

Session 1: Screening *De los 70 a los 90* (From the '70s to the '90s) and a roundtable session with the photographers **Alejandro Castellote, Manel Esclusa, Chema Madoz and Manuel Sonseca.**

Session 2: Screening *Welcome to Spain* and roundtable session with the **photographers Alejandro Castellote, Ricardo Cases and Julián Barón.**

Session 3: Screening *Fronteras blandas* (Soft Frontiers) and roundtable session with **Oliva María Rubio, Cristina de Middel and Carlos Irijalba.**

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As part of the programme, **workshops will be held for families and young people.** The ***Interactive Photomontages*** workshop will bring the world of photography and the New Vision of Antoni Arissa closer to children ages 6 to 12. After visiting the exhibition they will work and reflect on technology as a language for infusing new meaning into the work of this artist through the telling of his stories.

The ***Camera in your Pocket*** activity, for young people between 14 and 17 years of age, encourages the development of creativity through mobile devices. The kids will apply all manner of styles to their photographs, from vintage creations to more realistic or even Pictorialist styles connected with the Arissa exhibition. ***Photography and Modernity. The Beginnings of a New Photographic Vision***, based on the Arissa exhibition, will show young people between 14 and 17 years old the key elements that led to the birth of a new visual language, and the internal narrative of an image based on its lighting, composition and points of view.

Who am I? Yo (I) is a visual narrative workshop that proposes the creation of an art project based on the concept of "I" for people with and without visual, hearing or motor disabilities. The workshop is part of Fundación ONCE's 5th Biennale of Contemporary Art, with which Fundación Telefónica is collaborating through the organisation of this workshop.

The exhibition offers a guided tour (every Tuesday at 12 noon) and is supplemented by an **audio guide** with bonus features and comments on selected works, available for free (and also downloadable for tablets and mobile phones) in the hall at the venue. Users may also purchase the exhibition **catalogue**, which includes unseen photos and documents and magazines from the period.

Additionally, El Espacio, the headquarters of the Instagramers Gallery Madrid for a month now, has dedicated

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its first contest on this photographic social network to the Arissa exhibition. The 100 winning pieces will be exhibited from 17th June. The quality and originality of the images has been evaluated, as well as their relationship with the proposed theme, inspired by the work of Antoni Arissa: oblique lines, shadows, objects, low angle shots and bird's eye shots. The competition, under the hashtag **#igersgallery_arissa**, held between 19th May and 1st June, has received more than 4,500 photos.

For more information: **espacio.fundaciontelefonica.com**

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