



**OUTSTANDING
IN THE FIELD**
Cultural attaché and head of the Spanish Embassy's U.S. Cultural Office Guillermo Corral and Spanish Ambassador Ramón Gil-Casares are promoting their country's arts and culture to DC, even amid the financial problems back home.

The Reign of Spain

Despite—or perhaps because of—austerity measures, the Spanish diplomatic corps is featuring its artists here in more ways than ever before. | *By Jennifer Sergent* | *Portrait by Greg Powers* |

Washington's culture vultures have come to expect grand presentations of Spain's cutting-edge art and design throughout DC. But as the recession in Europe deepens and austerity measures take hold, one wonders what impact economic woes at home can have on the cultural diplomatic mission in the U.S. It turns out, creativity is not only the lifeblood of artists, but also those who promote them.

In the midst of Spain's economic crisis two years ago, the country's head of the embassy's cultural office, Guillermo Corral, first planted the seeds for raising the visibility of its countrymen's creativity with quickly lessening financial support. By working closely with local curators and artistic directors, the embassy created cost-sharing

partnerships—and began to weave its native talent into DC's already-existing cultural fabric. The efforts of Corral and his team have germinated to the point where Spanish artists have a larger presence in the District right now than ever before.

This month alone, guests at the annual Transformer gala and auction will be bidding on a stable of works by Spanish artists; FotoWeekDC includes two exhibits featuring the work of Spain's top photographers; and Spanish artists are behind the Hirshhorn's latest Black Box video installation. The Spanish embassy also worked with Frank Goodyear, associate curator of photographs for the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, in publishing a photographic book featuring the daily

lives of Latinos in the United States called *Latino: US (Cotidiano)* (Editorial RM, Nov. 2012). The Smithsonian will host a book signing in the spring.

"I'm very keen on partnering with American institutions," Corral says. "When you want to promote your country, you need to be sure you're engaging the local public." Those institutions "have the networks, they have the public, they have the name" to draw an audience, Corral adds. "It's an invaluable asset."

To kickstart his efforts, Corral oversaw the creation of the brand SPAIN arts&culture as a U.S.-based clearinghouse of Spanish cultural offerings under one Web site and catalog. American partners are key to its success, he says, and the pulse of the nationwide effort is in DC, where **CONTINUED...**

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For the Transformer auction, Executive and Artistic Director Victoria Reis tapped an online professional network of U.S.-based Spanish artists, created by the embassy, to choose several of the works up for bid. Spain's new ambassador, Ramón Gil-Casares, is the diplomatic chair of the organization's 10-year anniversary gala. "We are thrilled to support our emerging contemporary artists,

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and this event is a tremendous opportunity to connect them with collectors, art supporters and media," he says.

The Spanish presence will also be felt at FotoWeekDC, the ever-growing annual citywide festival with events in all four quadrants. Being involved in events like FotoWeekDC, Corral says, "pays off, because you end up being part of the city."

Additionally, he says, "We stimulate activity without having to completely produce and pay for it."

The advantage works both ways, as the Hirshhorn's Black Box curator, Kelly Gordon, points out. The newly opened *Ser Y Durar* by DEMOCRACIA, a collective of two Spanish artists, caught Gordon's eye at an art exhibition in Italy last year. She decided to mount the three-channel video, featuring individuals in the acrobatic art of parkour throughout Madrid's Civil Cemetery, in the Black Box theater. She then turned to the embassy for help bringing the artists to DC for a talk on Dec. 5. Says Gordon: "Their help assured that we were able to bring the artists here for the 'Meet the Artist' event." It sounds like a worthy cultural exchange indeed. ■

DIPLOMATIC CORE

The Spanish embassy is engaged with multiple institutions to showcase its native artists in Washington. Top: *Fetterman Massacre Act I* by Juanli Carrion is among the works to be auctioned at Transformer Nov. 30; Bottom: Photographer Gihan Tubbeh shot these two images for the book *Latino: US (Cotidiano)*.



Picture It

By integrating with Washington institutions, Spain's artists, architects and photographers are an increasing presence in DC's art scene. Be transported this month with any of these top picks. spainculture.us

Parkour Tour

The Hirshhorn's Black Box gallery presents a three-channel video work *Ser Y Durar* by DEMOCRACIA, a collective formed by Madrid socio-political artists Pablo España and Iván López. The film follows a group of "tracateurs" making their way through, over and around the gravestones and monuments in Madrid's Civil Cemetery using the acrobatic art of parkour. **Oct. 29-mid-January, 2013.** Seventh Street and Independence Avenue, hirshhorn.si.edu

FotoWeek Photography

The work of three generations of artists honored with Spain's National Photography Award will be among November's FotoWeek exhibits at the former residence of the ambassador of Spain. **Nov. 9-18.** 2801 16th St. NW, 202.728.2334, fotoweekdc.org

Once Upon a Time

Remember the spaghetti Westerns? Those Italian films with Clint Eastwood were actually made in the desert settings of Almería, Spain. An exhibition of Mark Parascandola's photography documents the forgotten legacy of moviemaking in Almería's dusty landscapes at the Embassy of Spain. **Through Nov. 18.** 2375 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, 202.728.2334, spainculture.us

Transformer Gala

The gallery's annual silent auction and benefit party at the Corcoran Gallery will feature Spanish Ambassador Ramón Gil-Casares as its diplomatic chair, and 15 works on the block are by U.S.-based Spanish artists. **Nov. 30.** 500 17th St. NW, 202.483.1102, transformerdc.org