

UNPUBLISHED C. 1968/70
 SPANISH PROTEST ALBUM
 INCLUDING TWO TEXTS
 BY FERNANDO ARRABAL
 AND JORGE LUIS BORGES

GERALD W. CLOUD RARE BOOKS

Drawings of Wrath in late 1960s Spain

José Maria (Pepe) Adillo, Ataúlfo Casado, and Meco
Amino Acidos.

No place, no date [Spain, circa 1968-1970]

(70 x 55 cm). 24 plates of original artwork: drawings in Indian ink, oil painting, and typed text on paper pasted in as captions; each plate is pasted to a larger backing board and bound on tabs across the top edge in a large album. With title stamped in gilt on the front board. \$ 27,500

UNKNOWN TO SCHOLARS: AN ASTONISHING, VERY LARGE (70 CM HIGH), AND UNPUBLISHED ALBUM BY THREE SPANISH ARTISTS FROM THE LATE 1960S INCLUDING TEXTS BY JORGE LUIS BORGES AND FERNANDO ARRABAL.

AMINOACIDOS
adillo - casado - meco



This stunning album is at once a graphic novel, an artist's book, a cinematically dynamic ensemble of contemporary art, whose content is laid out in framed panels of sequential narrative where the primary mode of expression is visual. The formality of the mise-en-page and the "photo-ready" finished quality of the work suggests that it may have been a maquette for an intended published work, one that would have been difficult to disseminate in Franco's Spain.

The album was created by three young Spanish artists, José Maria (Pepe) Adillo, Ataúlfo Casado, and Meco, who are named on the title page—the first two are well-known, but we are unable to trace any information for the third name: Meco, which is perhaps a pseudonym (the scandalous content of the album would have made authorship a liability under the dictatorship of General Franco). The ambiguity around the identity of the artists only adds to the numerous mysteries generated by this document.

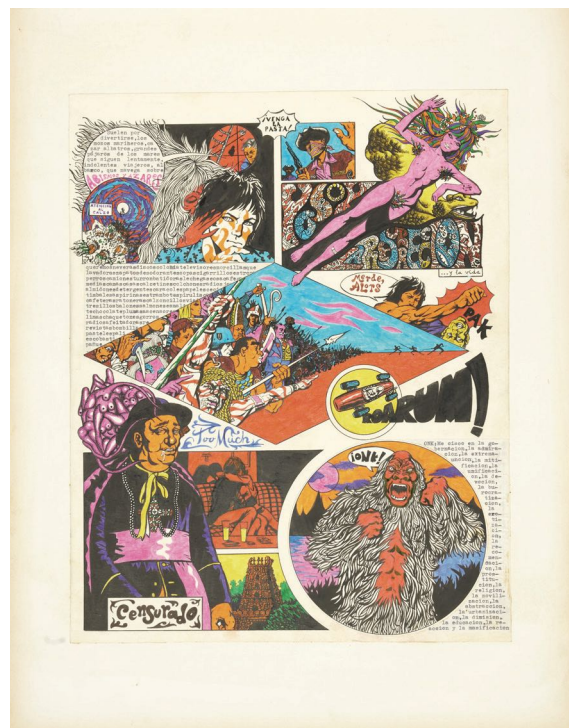
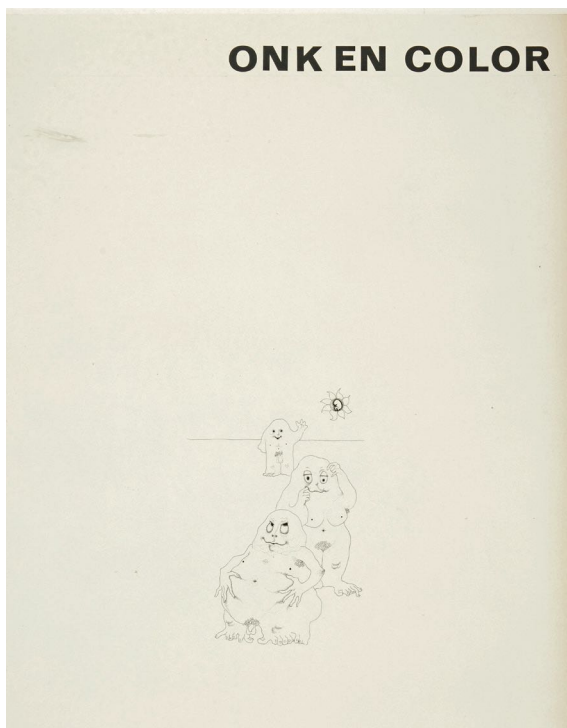
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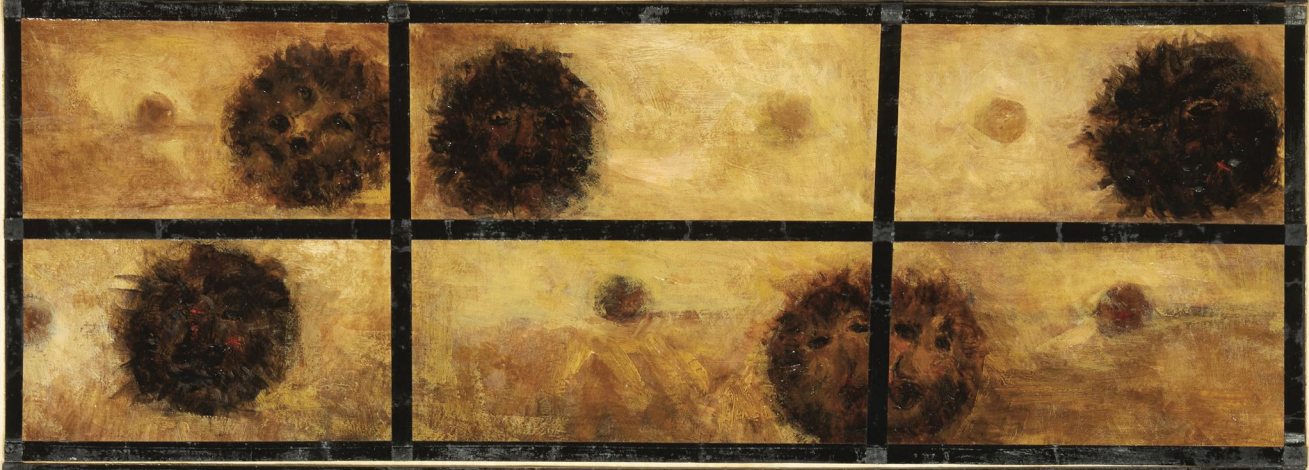
In this kinetic album, the succession of plates proceeds like a suite of film shorts produced in the method of an exquisite corpse, that is, short quick collaborative expressions of organized chaos, cinematic in movement, but exceptionally graphic in execution, and highly articulate to ears willing to listen.

The content of this work is steeped in the spirit of the counterculture, and the three young Spanish artists express without reserve their desire to break free of the repressive archaic society that was Spain at the end of the 1960s. The artists' concerns are of course parallel with those of the Parisian students of May 1968, the hippies of San Francisco, or the rock-and-roll counterculture sweeping the United States and the West. The album wears this influence on its sleeve, and uses the visual language of psychedelia, Pop art, graphic novels/comix, and a raw quality of neophyte art to express the desire for change—i.e. the work is not about prettiness or 'high art,' but graphic punch.

What is remarkable is that the work was produced in a tightly ruled Spain during the time of General Franco—many of the topics that are explicitly commented on here, such as the church's hypocrisy, the military, evolution, or sexuality to name only a few, would have been sufficient to land the artists in hot water. That they placed at the center of the work the controversial Spanish writer Fernando Arrabal around the time when he was the subject of arrest and legal scrutiny for blasphemy and denigrating the Spanish state, was not only brave, but in many ways a political statement. The work reveals an effort to denounce the received ideas of their contemporary society on every level: politics, religion, sexual orientation, and even the role and politics of language (as evident in the section "Masturbatory Talk").

Amino Acidos, for all its youthful vigor, is also quite sophisticated and hopeful. Not only a shout of protest, the work also contains a thread of continuity that runs through it, connected by images and words. Although *Amino Acidos* is unified by visual and topical themes, the three young artists who have collaborated to create this exuberant work have achieved something more: the accumulated repetition of graphic themes and figures opens the "doors of perception" to numerous interpretations, and the work demands deeper scrutiny and analysis. As the imagery bursts off the page there remains a significant base beneath whose breadth and depth will support scholars from a variety of disciplines.





A REMARKABLE SPANISH ARTWORK CREATED UNDER THE IRON RULE OF GENERAL FRANCO

Significantly, *Amino Acidos* is also a literary manuscript presenting the first illustrated versions of two important *contemporary* Spanish language texts, *Cronos o Hércules* (1967), by Jorge Luis Borges and the controversial play by Fernando Arrabal, *La Primera Comunión* (1967), texts that appeared in print contemporaneous to *Amino Acidos*, underscoring the work's interest in looking away from the past toward the present.

Placing Borges and Arrabal at the center of this work is perfectly appropriate: Borges, who politically considered himself an “anarchist who believes in the individual and not in the State,” rejected fascism as well as communism; he represents the mythical imagination and surrealism, vital visual elements in *Amino Acidos*. Meanwhile, Arrabal, an avowed anarchist, represents an iconoclastically modern and anti-establishment stance which is a strongly expressed visual element of the work. The primary position of Arrabal (whose has the greatest number of plates for any of the sections) suggests that Adillo, Casado, and Mecó may have had both his play and his 1967 *cause célèbre* in mind when they created the work. Arrabal was a well-known and provocative figure who had openly criticized General Franco and had been arrested and imprisoned in Spain in 1967 for blasphemy and denigrating the Spanish State. His defenders came from the highest ranks of the avant garde as well as the international intellectual community, including Samuel Beckett who appealed directly to the Spanish court on Arrabal's behalf.

It is worth noting that while the Borges text conforms to the first published edition*, the Arrabal text includes a speech that alternates from the published version of *La Primera Comunión*, one that is more scatological than the published text—we leave it to researchers to pursue the significance of these textual enhancements.

**to be precise: the text first appeared in 1957, reissued in 1967, and the version reproduced here is limited to the first half of Borges short text.*



Next page: Borges, *Cronos o Hércules*

El tratado Dudas y soluciones sobre
 Primeros principios del neoplatónico
 Damascio registra una curiosa versión de la
 teogonía y cosmogonía de Orfeo, en la que
 Cronos o Hercules — es un monstruo; según
 Geronimo y Helánico (si los dos no son uno solo),
 la doctrina órfica enseña que en el comienzo hubo
 agua y lodo, con los que se amasó la tierra entonces
 Estos dos principios puso como primeros: agua y tierra
 De ellos salió el tercero, un dragón alado, que por
 delante mostraba la cabeza de un toro, por detrás
 la de un león y por el medio el rostro de un
 Dios; lo llamaron Cronos que no envejece
 y también Heracles. Con él nació la
 Necesidad, que también se llama
 la Inevitable, y que se dilató
 sobre el Universo y tocó
 sus confines...

Encontraréis
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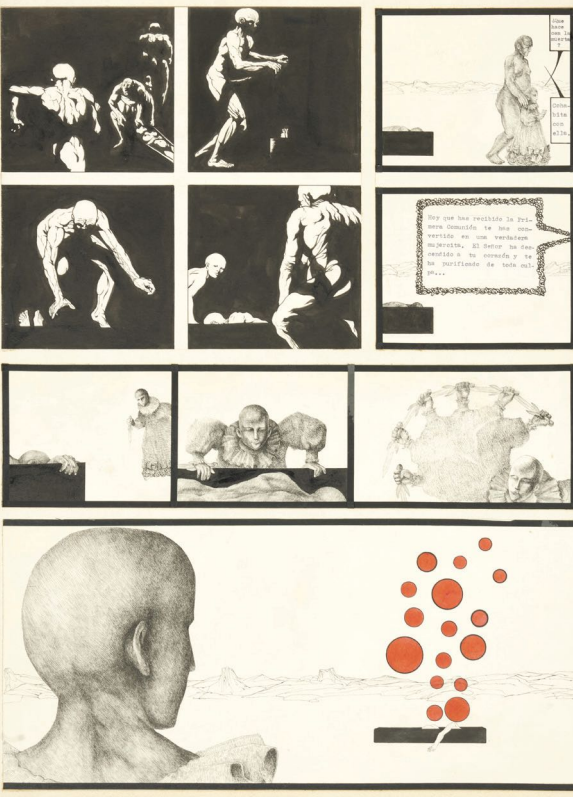
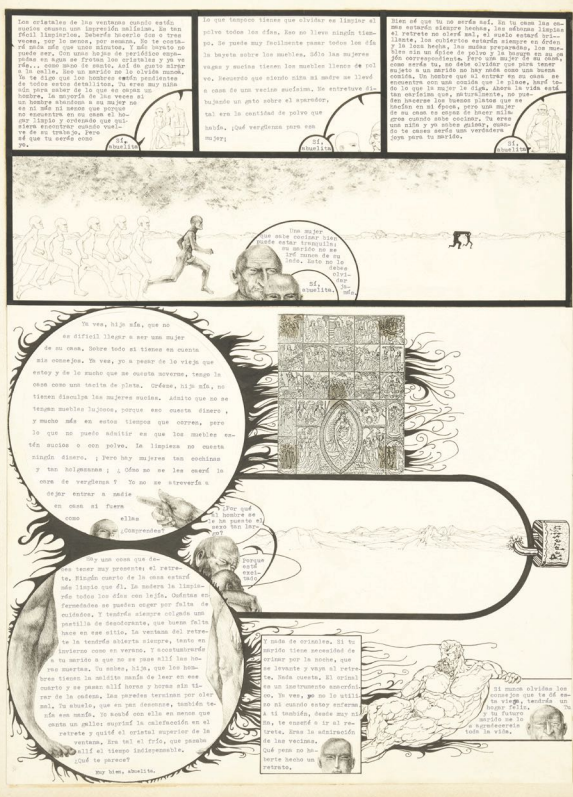
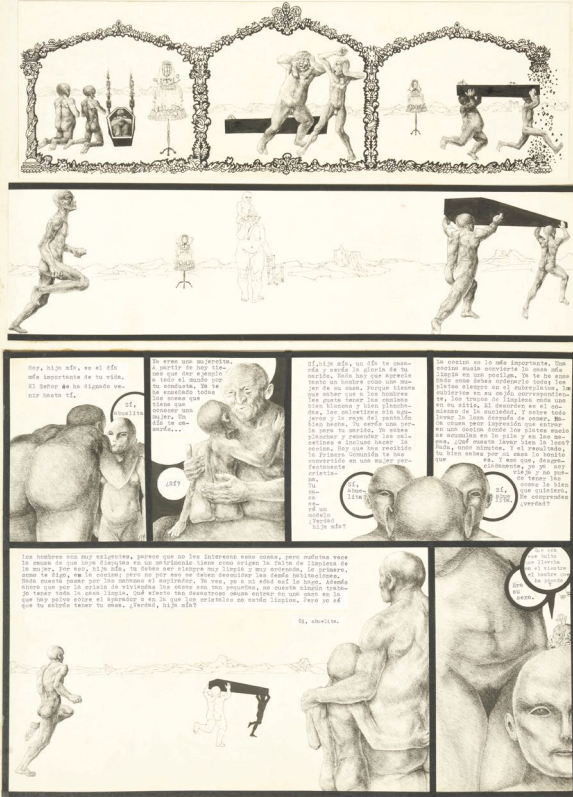
Ad
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PRIMERA COMUNION

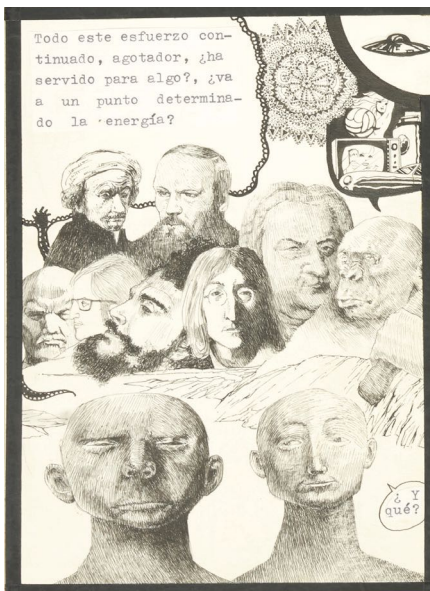


Fernando Arrabal, *La Primera Comunion*.



CONTEMPORARY THEMES, CONTEMPORARY WRITERS, CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS:

The themes of 1960s anti-establishment movement and psychedelic aesthetic dominate *Amino Acidos*, both in the illustration of contemporary themes (sexual freedom, women's rights, rejection of religious hegemony, anti-war, pro-drug use, the omnipresence of advertising and material culture, etc.) and prominent 1960s figures (Che Guevara, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, John F. Kennedy, or the fascist leader of Spain, General Franco); historical figures whose influence was felt in the 1960s, e.g., Darwin, Freud, Hitler, Lenin, or Marx, are also present. There are multitudes of portraits, figures, busts, heads, creatures, and motifs which will require significant study to categorize and interpret. Although only 24 pages long, the artist-authors have created a richly populated animation of their contemporary as well as their imaginary world.



The contemporary artists responsible for the work—Adillo, Casado, and Meco—are named and 2 of 3 are known, but a great deal remains to be learned about them and how they came to collaborate on this exuberant, and provocative album that is both politically confrontational and wholly original in its composition.

Regarding the title, if *amino acids* are the organic compounds that combine to form proteins and the building blocks of life, then this manuscript may be said to use art & literature as building blocks of expression, and thus life. But, considering the content and context of the work, we can also hear “Amigos Acidos” in the title, word play suggesting “friends on acid [LSD].”

The artists:

- **José Maria (Pepe) Adillo** (b. 1947-). Plates with large disturbing characters. Surrealist painter from Madrid, still active. (<https://pepeadillo.es/>)

- **Ataúlfo Casado** (b. 1948-). Oil paintings.

Youngest copyist ever accredited by the Museo Nacional de El Prado. Joined the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Madrid) at 17, then the Complutense the following year (in 1966). Having become blind (no date, but around 1997) he only started repainting in 2007. He is the most famous of the three.

<http://ataulfocasado.com/>

<https://www.saatchiart.com/ataulfocasadobustarviejo>

- **Meco**. [pseudonym?] No biographical information known. The comix / Pop psychedelia.

The album consists of 24 plates, each of which is an original artwork in black ink, oil paint, or collage, as follows:

- (1) Frontispiece, young man emerging from group of monsters, echoes the final plate
- (2) title page
- (3) table of contents, chapters listed, alongside a haloed muscle man posing above grotesque heads, many of which are nuns
- (4) Ch. 1: “+, +, + ...Persona”
- (5) ink and collage drawing, a lone figure confronted by societal forces
- (6) Ch. 2: “La Noble Bestia”
- (7) oil painting, futuristic and abstract
- (8) Ch. 3: “Primera Comunión”
- (9-11) Arrabal’s drama, the complete text, although not conforming to the published ed., with drawings related to the script
- (12) Ch. 4: “About the Match”
- (13) drawing in ink, a young couple [Adam & Eve?] attempts to light the darkness while surrounded by a mad hoard on one side and the monument of Freud, Darwin, etc. on the other
- (14) Ch. 5: “Cronos”
- (15) Borges text, with the beast Cronos portrayed
- (16) Ch. 6: “Masturbatory Talk”
- (17) ink drawing, reduces “Coito”, “Combate”, and “Muerte” to clichéd language; in the end, while an ape speaks of appliances, sports, and blonds, the Great Figures ask: “Has all this continuous, exhausting effort served any purpose? Does the energy go to a certain point? And what? Answer: Maybe that’s all; animal impulses, repression of some, sublimation of others and, in the end, nothingness... if you don’t have something nice to say, why don’t you shut up?” ...just before the aliens land.
- (18) Ch. 7: “Onk en Color”
- (19) drawing in color, the theme is hypocrisy; in many ways the dialog here is in reply to the existential crisis raised in the previous ch. [Onk beats his chest in a monolog]
- (20) Ch. 8: “Onk in B & W”
- (21) drawing in ink, the whole chaotic universe is present, an accumulation of the work’s themes
- (22) Ch. 9: “We Prefer McCay”

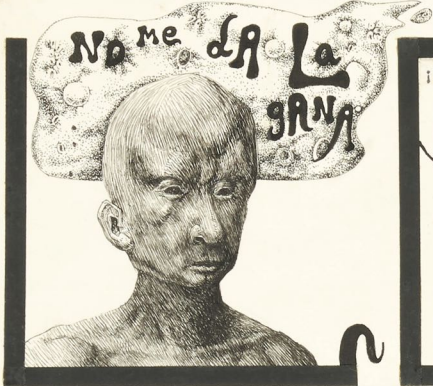
(23) drawing in ink, the innocent Little Nemo explores the chaotic world—is the theme irony or hope? We note the interesting preference for the early-20th cen. American comicstrip artist Winsor McCay, also a successful film animator

(24) Final drawing. A happy child who seems more fully realized than the lone figures from the frontispiece, etc., who is ankle-deep in the grotesque, but does she transcend it?



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VOLAR

