

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

FERNANDO ZÓBEL
(1924-1984)



Born in the Philippines, Fernando Zóbel was a painter, printmaker and collector who spent his life between his native country, Europe—Spain, in particular—and the United States. He was a central figure in the Spanish abstract art movement and founded the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca, Spain.

BIOGRAPHY

THE PAINTER FERNANDO ZÓBEL'S EARLY LIFE

Fernando Zóbel was born in Manila in 1924 to one of the most influential families in the Philippines: the Zóbel de Ayala family. His father, Enrique Zóbel de Ayala, was an industrial tycoon. Growing up in the Philippines, Fernando Zóbel learned English as his second language. As a child, Fernando Zóbel travelled regularly, both in the Philippines and in Europe—to Spain, in particular. He completed his high school education in 1940, graduating from the Brent International School in Baguio, the Philippines. During the Second World War, Fernando Zóbel spent one year studying medicine at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila in 1941. Suffering from a spinal problem the following year, he was forced to drop out of medical school and was subsequently bedridden for almost a year at the National Orthopaedic Hospital. It was during this period that Fernando Zóbel began experimenting with painting.

Fernando Zóbel left the Philippines for the United States in 1946 to study philosophy and literature at Harvard University, where he taught himself to paint with oils. At Harvard, Fernando Zóbel developed a passion for the work of Federico García Lorca and began translating his book *El amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* [The Love of Don Perlimplín and Belisa in the Garden] into English, illustrating the translation with his own drawings. Fernando Zóbel then met the painter couple Reed Champion and Jim Pfeufer, who became his close friends and would mentor Fernando Zóbel on pictorial matters. Fernando Zóbel's first works—*A las cinco de la tarde* (1946) and *Arlequín. La luna y Pierrot* (1947)—were inspired by Picasso's Blue Period and the Synthetic Cubism movement. Fernando Zóbel also reproduced works by Vincent van Gogh and Andrea del Verrocchio around this time. Fernando Zóbel graduated from Harvard in 1949 with "magna cum laude" honours thanks to his thesis on the theatrical works of Federico García Lorca, which was entitled *Theme and Conflict in Lorcan Drama*.

Under the guise of training in business management for the family business, Fernando Zóbel began studying law in September 1949 at Harvard Law School. Quickly abandoning the law, he opted instead to work in the Graphic Arts Department at the Harvard College Library, under the supervision of the curator Philip Hofer.

THE PAINTER FERNANDO ZÓBEL'S ARTISTIC TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES

Fernando Zóbel worked at the Graphic Arts Department until 1951, training in every kind of printmaking technique—from etching and drypoint to xylography. He also organised printmaking classes and gave his first lectures, covering subjects such as French printing and illustrated books. During this period, Fernando Zóbel formed a profound friendship with the Bostonian painter Hyman Bloom—the artist who influenced him the most.

Fernando Zóbel took part in his first two group exhibitions in 1951, both of which were held at the Swetzoff Gallery in Boston. At the first, he exhibited works alongside artists such as Hyman Bloom, Jack Truman and Karl Priebe. The second presented his prints, which were exhibited together with pieces by Maurice de Vlaminck, Paul Klee, Mark Chagall, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, Pablo Picasso and Paul Cézanne, among others.

Towards the end of 1951, and after a stay in Spain, Fernando Zóbel returned to the Philippines to start working for the family business. However, he continued to paint every day and maintained contact with the American art world.

FERNANDO ZÓBEL IN MANILA: CAUGHT BETWEEN BUSINESS AND ART

From 1952 to 1961, Fernando Zóbel led a double life, alternating between the family business and his artistic pursuits for nearly a decade. In 1952, Fernando Zóbel became close to a group of young Filipino artists who were showing at the Philippine Art Gallery in Manila, forming friendships with the painters Arturo Luz, Hernando Ocampo, Anita Magsaysay-Ho and Vicente Manansala and the writers Rafael Zulueta da Costa, I. P. Soliongco and Emilio Aguilar Cruz. Fully engaged in the artistic debates of these young painters on art and cultural identity in the Philippines, Fernando Zóbel joined the Asociación de Arte de Filipinas in Manila. He was subsequently elected president of the Asociación, where he exhibited his works and organised various projects, including the publication of a book on the history of Philippine art between the 16th and 20th centuries, which was published under the title *The Art of the Philippines* in 1958. As such, Fernando Zóbel became a central artistic figure in the world of modern Philippine art.

During the 1950s, Fernando Zóbel worked with The Philippine Art Gallery in Manila, which hosted several solo exhibitions of his work in 1953, 1956, 1957 and 1958. Abandoning his Bostonian style and the themes of symbolism and romance that had previously marked his work, Fernando Zóbel refocused his attention on themes from Philippine folklore. He took an interest in street scenes and religious subjects, which he painted in vivid, solid colours—a painting style reminiscent of the work of Henri Matisse.

In 1953, Fernando Zóbel began experimenting with abstract painting, but he soon abandoned this new direction and would later destroy his first attempts from this period, which included *Reflected Sunset* (1953) and *Barco frutero II* (1953). The latter of these two works was exhibited, among others, at the *II Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte*, which he participated in the same year in Havana.

THE PAINTER FERNANDO ZÓBEL'S STAY IN PROVIDENCE, UNITED STATES

Between 1954 and 1955, Fernando Zóbel reached an important juncture, experiencing a personal and artistic crisis. After a year of travelling in the United States and Europe, he emerged from the crisis as a new painter—open to abstract painting. From October 1954 to May 1955, Fernando Zóbel was artist-in-residence at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, where he was reunited with his friends James and Reed Pfeufer. During the residency, Fernando Zóbel perfected his printmaking techniques and attended courses in painting, drawing and architecture. While in Providence, he painted vibrantly coloured landscapes with thickly painted surfaces and some portraits. It was during this period that the Swetzoff Gallery in Boston organised his first solo exhibition of works painted in the Philippines.

In the midst of his artistic soul-searching, Fernando Zóbel made two discoveries that led him to define a new pictorial language. The first was Mark Rothko's work, which he discovered at the exhibition *Recent Paintings by Mark Rothko* at the Providence Museum towards the end of 1954. Profoundly struck by Rothko's paintings, Fernando Zóbel visited the exhibition every day to marvel at his large, vibrant fields of colour, horizontal and abstract. The second revelation was his exploration of photography, which he tried his hand at under the guidance of his friend Ronald Binks, who allowed him to faithfully reproduce everything that interested him.

In 1955, the Rhode Island School of Design's Museum of Art presented an exhibition of Fernando Zóbel's work: *Paintings by Fernando Zóbel and by Elias Friedensohn*. During his stay in Providence, Fernando Zóbel pursued his artistic endeavours with great intensity. Fernando Zóbel travelled regularly to Harvard, Boston—where he visited Hyman Bloom—and New York, witnessing the dawn of the American Abstract Expressionism movement first-hand. He visited the Kootz Gallery—which presented works by Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti and Georges Mathieu—in New York and met his fellow countryman Alfonso Ossorio at his house in East Hampton. Their long meeting would have a profound impact on Fernando Zóbel, who was in the midst of a search for identity and artistic meaning.

After his time in Rhode Island, Fernando Zóbel took a trip to Europe, first going to Paris and then travelling to Spain and Italy. In Madrid, he discovered the beginnings of the Spanish abstract painting movement at the Galería Fernando Fe through works by artists such as Guillermo Delgado, Luis Feito and Rafael Canogar. He also met the artist Benjamín Palencia at his studio and the painter Gerardo Rueda, a major figure in the Spanish abstract painting movement, with whom he formed a profound friendship.

FERNANDO ZÓBEL BETWEEN MANILA AND SPAIN: IN SEARCH OF HIS OWN ARTISTIC STYLE

On his return to Manila, Fernando Zóbel maintained contact with the artists he had met in Spain, profoundly transforming his artistic style. Fernando Zóbel destroyed many of his previous works, abandoning figuration and creating new works that sought to bring together the luminism of Mark Rothko's works, the materialism of Luis Feito's works and the calligraphic gestures of Franz Kline. In 1956, a new solo exhibition was organised for Fernando Zóbel at the Philippine Art Gallery in Manila. Entitled *Fifteen paintings by Fernando Zóbel*, it presented his abstract works, which were strongly influenced by the American Abstract Expressionist movement. The reception is mixed.

Travelling to Japan for the Ayala Corporation during the same period, the painter Fernando Zóbel was profoundly affected by Japanese aesthetics and the art of the Japanese garden. From 1956 to 1960, Fernando Zóbel taught classes at the Ateneo de Manila University in art history, covering themes such as contemporary art, Chinese art and Japanese art. This brought him into contact with a whole new network of Filipino and North American intellectuals. He was also appointed Honorary Cultural Attaché of the Spanish Embassy in the Philippines. In 1961, Fernando Zóbel donated his extensive collections of Philippine archaeology, religious sculpture and contemporary art to the Ateneo de Manila University. His donation formed the basis of the Atenero Art Gallery, which was created in the same year. In the following year, he was awarded the University's first honorary doctorate and made honorary director of the museum.

From 1957 onwards, Fernando Zóbel's painting style evolved, tending towards a greater expression of rhythm and movement. Fernando Zóbel then began work on a series entitled *Saetas* [literally: "Arrows"] inspired by Japanese dry landscape gardens, in which he layered very fine lines over coloured backgrounds. In order to achieve these long lines of paint with great precision and finesse, Fernando Zóbel used a surgical syringe—a technique he would go on to use regularly in his work, and one which recalled the precision achieved by the pen in his drawings.

Fernando Zóbel began working on an archaeological dig on the plot of a family finca on the Catalan peninsula in 1958, in parallel to his artistic endeavours. Carried forward by the Museo Nacional de Filipinas, these excavations uncovered many pieces of Chinese porcelain, which further heightened the artist's interest in Chinese art. At the request of Fernando Zóbel, the pieces discovered were donated to the Museo Nacional de Filipinas.

In the autumn of 1958, Fernando Zóbel returned to Spain and settled in Madrid, where he shared his studio with his friend Gerardo Rueda. Befriending the painters Antonio Saura and Eusebio Sempere, among others, he began a collection of Spanish abstract paintings. This collection would form the basis of the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español, which he would later establish in Cuenca. In the following year, Zóbel's first solo exhibition in Spain was presented at the Galería Biosca in Madrid, directed by the gallery owner Juana Mordó. Fernando Zóbel was the first abstract artist to be exhibited there. The exhibition presented works from the *Saetas* series and from a new series of works in black and white: *Serie Negra*. Antonio Magaz-Sangro published *Zóbel. Pinturas y dibujos* on the subject of these works.

Fernando Zóbel also took part in the group exhibition *Negro y Blanco. Exposición homenaje a Chillida. Oteiza. Miró-Artigas. Tàpies y Palazuelo*, which was presented at the Sala Darro in Madrid.

Fernando Zóbel fully identified with the young generation of Spanish painters he frequented and with whom he became friends, including Gerardo Rueda, Tony Magaz, Antonio Lorenzo, Antonio Saura and Manolo Millares, among others. In December 1959, the artist confided: "Me encuentro a mí mismo en la pintura de España ; soy uno más. Aceptado como tal por los otros, que son, en general, mis amigos" ["I have found myself in the Spanish painting scene; I am just another one of them. I have been accepted as such by the others, who are, in general, my friends."]

Even when he returned to the Philippines for a period of time, his mind was elsewhere. In 1960, Fernando Zóbel took part in the group exhibition *Before Picasso after Miró* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; the following year, his works were exhibited in a solo exhibition at the renowned Luz Gallery in Manila. Directed by his friend Arturo Lu, the latter would become the most famous gallery in the Philippines. The exhibition was a success.

Emerging from a harrowing internal conflict that seriously weakened his health, Fernando Zóbel decided to put an end to his double life as a businessman and painter—he left the Philippines and moved to Spain in 1961 to devote himself fully to painting.

THE PAINTER FERNANDO ZÓBEL'S PERMANENT MOVE TO SPAIN

Fernando Zóbel moved to Madrid in 1961, where he settled permanently. A solo exhibition presenting works from the *Serie Negra* was held at the Sala Neblí in Madrid in the same year. While critics once associated Fernando Zóbel with informalism (informalismo), the link between the two was somewhat tenuous: Fernando Zóbel's works, which were very graphic, were the result of steady

and considered movements that were fully mastered by the artist. This distinguished him from the spontaneous, gestural styles of artists such as Rafael Canogar, Manolo Millares and Antonio Saura.

In 1962, Fernando Zóbel participated in two major group exhibitions abroad: *Modern Spanish Painting* at the Tate Gallery in London and the *XXXI Biennale di Venezia* in Venice.

Fernando Zóbel also returned to printmaking, exploring etching techniques in particular, and developed a great correspondence with the American printmaker and close friend Bernard Childs—who had a great influence on his work. He was reunited with Childs in Paris during a trip to the French capital accompanied by Antonio Lorenzo and Gerardo Rueda. In Madrid, Fernando Zóbel regularly visited the Museo del Prado, where he requested a copyist's card.

The year 1963 signalled a turning point in Fernando Zóbel's work. Making a return to colour, the artist began using sienna earth tones, ochres and greys to evoke the world of memory and recall the lived experience, or "recordar en términos pictóricos" ["to remember in images"] in the words of the artist himself. This artistic transformation was sparked by the literary works of Marcel Proust and his novel *In Search of Lost Time*, which the artist particularly admired. Fernando Zóbel's new works were first exhibited in Spain in 1964 at a solo exhibition held at the Galería Juana Mordó—this new gallery organised several solo shows for Fernando Zóbel during the 1960s and 1970s.

FERNANDO ZÓBEL AND THE CREATION OF THE MUSEO DE ARTE ABSTRACTO ESPAÑOL IN CUENCA

It was during this period that Fernando Zóbel began seeking ways to share his substantial collection of abstract Spanish painting with the public. The collection, which he began in 1955, included works by Antonio Saura, Gerardo Rueda, Luis Feito, Guillermo Delgado, Antonio Lorenzo, Manolo Millares and Eusebio Sempere, among others. He initially considered Toledo for the location of the project, visiting the city with his friend Gerardo Rueda. It was, however, in Cuenca in Castilla-La Mancha that the project took shape in June 1963, when Fernando Zóbel was invited to visit the city by his friend, the painter and sculptor Gustavo Torner. The latter introduced the idea of the project to the mayor of the city and it was decided that the future museum would be housed in the famous Casas Colgadas [Hanging Houses] of Cuenca.

Fernando Zóbel was delighted by the project, which he brought to fruition in collaboration with his friends Gerardo Rueda and Gustavo Torner. He began working intently on enriching his collection of abstract art—adding works by José Guerrero, Gustavo Torner, Manuel

Hernández Mompó, Eduardo Chillida and Antoni Tàpies, among others—and travelled regularly to Cuenca to oversee the project. The city began attracting artists from the same generation, such as Gerardo Rueda, Manuel Millares, Manuel Hernández Mompó and Amadeo Gabín, to visit and set up their studios there, not forgetting Antonio Saura and Gustavo Torner, who lived there. Cuenca was an inexhaustible source of creative inspiration for Zóbel, who bought a house and set up a studio there.

The Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in Cuenca officially opened on 30 June 1966 with about one hundred paintings, twelve sculptures, some two hundred drawings and prints, and several illustrated books in its collection. The museum quickly gained international acclaim and attracted many specialists, curators and artists from all over the world. Alfred H. Barr Jr., the first director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, visited the museum in 1967. In 1978, an extension designed by Gustavo Torner tripled the museum's exhibition space, while creating a new museum library specialised in abstract art and expanding its reserves of paintings and archives.

In 1980, Fernando Zóbel donated his own art collection and personal library to the Fundación Juan March, which has been the owner of the museum ever since, with responsibility for the preservation and enrichment of the collection.

Living in Spain, Fernando Zóbel continued to travel around the world and made regular trips to the Philippines for various projects. Zóbel travelled to New York in 1965 for a solo exhibition at the Bertha Schaeffet Gallery.

FERNANDO ZÓBEL'S SERIAL PAINTINGS AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

In 1967, Fernando Zóbel began to serialise his paintings. In his first new series, entitled *Diálogos*, Zóbel used pencil, pen and brushwork to illustrate dialogues with works by both classic and modern artists, such as Rembrandt, Nicolas Poussin, Tintoretto, William Turner, Claude Monet and Georges Braque. The pieces in the *Diálogos* series emerged as reflections of the very heart of Zóbel's analytical thoughts and reflections.

During the same period, Rafael Pérez-Madero became Fernando Zóbel's secretary, manager and associate for all of his works and projects.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Fernando Zóbel's works became more geometric, tending towards a colder style of abstraction: space was constructed by pencil-drawn lines and geometric shapes that gave an architectural framework to the composition.

The Department of Printing and Graphic Arts at Harvard University published *Fernando Zóbel. Cuenca. Sketchbook of a Spanish Hilltown* in 1970, bringing together some forty ink and watercolour illustrations made by Fernando Zóbel in Cuenca between 1963 and 1965. In the same year, Fernando Zóbel participated in the group exhibition *12 pintores españoles del Museo de Arte Abstracto*, which was presented at the Göteborgs Konstmuseum in Gothenburg, Sweden. The artist travelled to Gothenburg for the occasion, where he attended a conference on "The Spanish Abstract Generation".

During the 1970s, Fernando Zóbel developed two series inspired by Cuenca and its surroundings—*El Júcar* (1971-1972) and *La vista* (1972-1974)—as well as two series inspired by studies of the body and the body in movement—*Academias* (1973) and *Fútbol* (1973). Following his works *El lago* and *El estanque* (1971), Fernando Zóbel decided to create a large painting on the theme of the river Júcar, which runs through Cuenca. The project gave rise to a series of some thirty paintings, around one hundred drawings and numerous photographs on the theme. The series was exhibited at the Galería Juana de Aizpuru in Seville and at the Casa de Cultura in Cuenca in 1972, and went on to be shown at the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español in 1995.

The artist then shifted his focus to the views he enjoyed from his studio in Cuenca, creating *La vista*—a series of works in shades of grey, in which any geometric structure tends to disappear. The series was later exhibited in 1974 at the Galería Juana Mordó in Madrid and at the Galería Juana de Aizpuru in Seville.

In 1972, Fernando Zóbel also produced the *Academias* series, in which he explored the human body and expanded his studies of the human figure, basing his studies on paintings from the Italian Renaissance, Mannerist and Baroque art movements as well as live models. After that, he went on to create the *Fútbol* series—a thematic pretext to explore the body in movement—through which he tried to reconcile colour and movement through painting. From a technical point of view, Fernando Zóbel was making greater use of photography in his creative process, which accentuated the cold quality and increasingly analytical nature of his works.

On the 25th anniversary of his graduation in 1974, Fernando Zóbel travelled back to Harvard University, where he was made Honorary Curator of Calligraphy at the Harvard College Library.

Following on from the *La vista* series, the later works of which were characterised by the dominant use of white, Fernando Zóbel created the *Seria Blanca* series between 1975 and 1978. The series featured subtly graduated shades of white that structured the space and volumes

of its pieces—the shades of white merged with the linen of the canvas and the white of the background paper, radiating in a vivid display of brilliance.

Indeed, it was no longer movement itself that interested the artist, but the moment of rest between two movements, especially when captured in the gestures of children. Fernando Zóbel created a sub-series called *Gestos* focused on this particular subject, naming each work after its model: *Nazario* (1977), *Leonardo* (1977-78), *Dioni* (1977), *El Rafi* (1977) and *Barocci* (1977-78). He was also drawn to the study of cyclists and musicians in concert to further explore this theme.

The artist Fernando Zóbel also painted watercolours, a selection of which were exhibited at the Galerie Jacob in Paris in 1977 and then at the Galería Theo and the Galería Rayuela in Madrid in 1978.

Fernando Zóbel also wrote about his dear artist friends—including Simeón Sáiz, Eusebio Sempere, the photographer brothers Jorge and Jaime Blassi and the Filipino architect Leandro Valencia Locsin—and continued to give lectures and conferences, attending the “De Kooning: expresionismo y color” conference in 1979 as part of the American artist’s retrospective exhibition at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid.

Fernando Zóbel suffered from a cerebral thrombosis in 1980 during a stay in Manila, from which he recovered. On the painter’s return to Spain, he fell into a depression that spilled over into his creative work: he destroyed many of his works and reverted vehemently to the use of colour, which came to prevail over form. Fernando Zóbel also made use of new media such as pastels and devoted himself fully to photography. With his final series *Las orillas (Variaciones sobre un río)* (1979-1982), Fernando Zóbel returned to his favourite theme: the Júcar river in Cuenca. Despite health problems, Zóbel continued to exhibit his work—in Tenerife, Girona, Pamplona and Valencia—and went on an extended trip to Italy.

In 1983, Fernando Zobel took part in the exhibition *259 imágenes. Fotografía actual en España* at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, which highlighted his photography work. His essay “Para mí la fotografía es el recuerdo” was published in the exhibition catalogue. The painter Fernando Zobel died of a heart attack in 1984 during a trip to Rome. His body was repatriated to Spain and buried in the Saint Isidro cemetery in Cuenca, near to the Júcar river. A large Zóbel retrospective exhibition was held at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid that same year, which would travel all over Spain.

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SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Alicante, Colección Arte Siglo XX
Barcelona, Banco Urquijo
Bilbao, Museo de Bellas Artes
Boston, MA, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University
Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts
Caracas, Museo de Bellas Artes
Cuenca, Caja de Ahorros de Castilla-La Mancha
Cuenca, Fundación Antonio Pérez
Cuenca, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español
Gothenburg (Sweden), Göteborgs Konstmuseum
Huelva, Fundación El Monte, Caja de Ahorros de Huelva y Sevilla
Johannesburg, Johannesburge Kunstmuseum
Lanzarote (Spain), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Arrecife
Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery
London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings
Madrid, Banco de España
Madrid, Banco del Canadá
Madrid, Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria
Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional
Madrid, Colección Aena de Arte Contemporáneo
Madrid, Fundación Caja Madrid
Madrid, Fundación Juan March
Madrid, Fundación Santander Central Hispano
Madrid, Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando
Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
Madrid, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando
Manila, Ayala Foundation, Inc.
Manila, Cultural Center of the Philippines
Manila, Eugenio López Foundation, Inc.
Manila, National Museum of the Philippines
Middletown, CT, Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University
New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art
New York, Chase Manhattan Bank
New York, Hispanic Society of America
New York, New York Public Library
New York, Rochester Art Gallery
Omaha, NE, Joslyn Art Museum
Palma de Mallorca, Museu d'Art Espanyol Contemporani
Fundación Juan March
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Department of Prints and Photography
Poughkeepsie, NY, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College
Quezon City (Philippines), Ateneo Art Gallery, Ateneo de Manila University
San Francisco, CA, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts
Seville, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo
Seville, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo

Valladolid, Patio Herreriano Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Español

Vitoria (Spain), Artium, Centro Museo de Arte Contemporáneo

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Group exhibitions, Swetstoff Gallery, Boston, 1951, 1955
Solo exhibitions, The Philippine Art Gallery, Manila, 1953, 1956, 1957, 1958
II Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte, Havana, 1953
Second International Contemporary Art Exhibition, New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, 1953
II Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte, Havana, Ciudad Trujillo (now Santo Domingo), Caracas, Bogotá, 1954
12 paintings by Fernando Zóbel, Contemporary Arts Gallery, Manila; Swetstoff Gallery, Boston, 1954
Friedensohn and Zóbel. Paintings, Rhode Island School of Design's Museum of Art, Providence (United States), 1955
III Bienal Hispanoamericana de Arte, Barcelona, 1955
6 Contemporary Painters, group exhibition, George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1956
Solo exhibition, Galería Biosca, Madrid, 1959
La Joven Pintura Española, touring group exhibition: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Fribourg; Kunsthalle, Basel; Akademie für Bautechnik, Munich; Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg (Sweden), 1959
Before Picasso After Miró, group exhibition, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1960
Espacio y color en la pintura española de hoy, touring group exhibition: Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro; São Paulo; Montevideo; Buenos Aires, 1960
Solo exhibitions, Luz Gallery, Manila, 1961, 1964, 1966, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1977
Modern Spanish painting, touring group exhibition: Tate Gallery, London; Birmingham; Liverpool, 1962
XXXI Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 1962
XXV años de pintura española, touring group exhibition in Spain: Seville, San Sebastián, Vigo, Pontevedra, Santiago de Compostela, Barcelona, Zaragoza, 1962
Spanish painters, group exhibition, D'Arcy Gallery, New York, 1962
Solo exhibitions, Galería Juana Mordó, Madrid, 1964, 1966, 1971, 1974
Solo exhibitions, Bertha Schaefer Gallery, New York, 1965, 1968
Tokyo Biennale, Tokyo, 1965
Solo exhibitions, Casa de Cultura de Cuenca, Cuenca, 1967, 1969, 1972
Spanische kunst heute. 21 kunstler aus der samlung des museums fur abstrakte kunst-cuenca, group exhibition, Spanische Kulturinstitut, Munich, 1968
12 pintores españoles, group exhibition, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg (Sweden), 1970
Solo exhibitions, Galería Egam, Madrid, 1970, 1975
Spanish art today, group exhibition, Pretoria Art Museum, Pretoria (South Africa), 1971
Solo exhibitions, Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Seville, 1972, 1974

Solo exhibition, Linda Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, 1973
 Solo exhibition, Galerie Jacob, Paris, 1977
 Solo exhibitions, Galería Theo, Madrid, 1978, 1982
 Solo exhibitions, Galería Theo, Valencia, 1978, 1980, 1982
 Solo exhibitions, Galería Rayuela, Madrid, 1978, 1995
 Solo exhibitions, Sala Celini, Madrid, 1978, 1982
Pintura española del siglo XX, group exhibition, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico, 1978
La serie blanca, solo exhibition, Galería Theo, Barcelona, 1979
Contemporary Spanish prints, touring group exhibition in the United States: Florida, Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, Cleveland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, New Mexico, California, Kentucky, Virginia, 1979–1982
 Solo exhibition, Círculo de Bellas Artes, Tenerife, 1980
De picasso a nuestros días, touring group exhibition: Museo Nacional, Caracas; Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico D.F.; Museo de Bellas Artes de Monterrey, Mexico, 1980
 Solo exhibitions, Galería Palace, Grenada, 1981, 1983
 Solo exhibition, Sala de Exposiciones El Monte, Seville, 1983
Zóbel, Retrospectiva, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, and then as a touring exhibition in Spain: Barcelona, Albacete, Valencia, Zaragoza, Cuenca, Palma de Mallorca, Santander, Seville, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1984–1986
Arte español contemporáneo, group exhibition, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 1985
Creative Transformations. Drawings and Paintings by Fernando Zóbel, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Boston, 1987
Zóbel. El júcar. La vista. El río, Torre de los Guzmanes, La Algaba, Seville, 1991
Fernando Zóbel. Cuadernos de apuntes y portofolios. Una visión de cuenca, Sala de Exposiciones del Antiguo Convento de las Carmelitas, Cuenca, 1991
La semana santa vista por los pintores conquenses, group exhibition, Sala de Exposiciones del Antiguo Convento de las Carmelitas, Cuenca, 1992
Fernando Zóbel. Río Júcar, Sala de Exposiciones del Museo de Arte Abstracto Español de Cuenca, Cuenca, 1994
Fernando Zóbel. Río Júcar, Museo de Bellas Artes de San Pío V, Valencia, 1995
Zóbel, Sala de Exposiciones BBK, Bilbao, 1998
Zóbel: Obra gráfica, Museo de Arte Abstracto Español de Cuenca, Cuenca, 1999
Zóbel. Retrospectiva, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2003
Zóbel. Retrospectiva, Casa Zavala, Cuenca, 2003
Zóbel. Retrospectiva, Sede Caja de San Fernando, Seville, 2003
Zóbel. Obra gráfica, Caja de San Fernando, Cádiz, 2003
Zóbel. Obra gráfica, Caja de San Fernando, Jerez de La Frontera, 2004
Fernando Zóbel in the 1950s, Ayala Foundation, Manila, 2009

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Arturo Luz, *Sketchbooks, Fernando Zóbel*, Manila, 1954
 Antonio Magaz Sangro, *Zóbel, Pintura y dibujos*, Madrid, 1959
 Antonio Lorenzo, *Zóbel. Dibujos, drawings, dessins*, Madrid, 1963
 Mario Hernández, *Fernando Zóbel : el misterio de lo transparente*, Madrid, Ediciones Rayuela, Colección Maniluvios, 1977
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