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### Rupture of All Convention: The Dehumanized Art and Particularistic Politics of the Avant-Garde in Spain

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# RUPTURE OF ALL CONVENTION: THE DEHUMANIZED ART AND PARTICULARISTIC POLITICS OF THE AVANT-GARDE IN SPAIN

Courtney Richman

*Mentor: Ignacio Infante*

In the early twentieth century, the Spanish avant-garde flourished. With the goal of redefining reality through stylistically experimental art forms, the movement revolutionized the role of art in Spanish society and ruptured all aesthetic and sociopolitical conventions. However, the sociopolitical significance of this artistic revolution has been disputed by renowned cultural commentators, including the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. In his treatise on the subject, *La deshumanización del arte* (*The Dehumanization of Art*), Ortega argues that the avant-garde movement generated works without any clear connection to the human experience, making this movement incapable of transcending pure aestheticism. Based on the prominence of Ortega's criticism, this definition of the avant-garde has informed the way in which the movement has been conceptualized historically. This study seeks to characterize the role of the avant-garde in Spain by putting Ortega's aesthetic theory into dialogue with his political ideas and representative works of the Spanish avant-garde. An examination of the tension between Ortega's aesthetic theory and his political ideas—as they manifest in his book addressing the political state of the nation, *España invertebrada* (*Invertebrate Spain*)—suggests that his interpretation of the avant-garde is significantly biased by his own political agenda. Analysis of the surrealist works of the Andalusian poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) and the materialism-based visual arts of the Catalan painter Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) reveals the intricate and intentional connection between art and politics in these works and contributes to the understanding of the avant-garde across time, artistic mediums, and geographical regions. Ultimately, this analysis of the Spanish avant-garde exposes the limitations of Ortega's aesthetic theory and contributes to the understanding of the movement as politically particularistic, aesthetically experimental, and capable of redefining the reality of Spain.