

FORMAT 2024

FORMAT International Photography Festival happens every other year in Derby. As a part of FORMAT's off year programme the festival has partnered with LCB Depot to celebrate its 20th anniversary, bringing amazing international photography to Leicester!

Venues across the city are hosting exhibitions from **25th March - 26th April 2024**. Find out more about the exhibition venues and artists involved at <https://lcbdepot.co.uk/event/format24/> or @lcbdepot



Mar de Castilla

Jorge Pérez Higuera

Photography

Spain is divided into three zones based on the level of rainfall: humid Spain, which covers the north and northwest; dry Spain, which occupies the majority of the; and semidesert Spain, which is concentrated in the southeast (Provinces of Murcia, Alicante, Granada and mostly of Almería).

The Tagus-Segura transfer Project was conceived during the Second Spanish Republic in 1933 as part of the National Hydraulic Works Plan to bring water to the southeastern region of the country which is a fertile but dry land. However, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War paralyzed the project for several decades.

In the 1950s, during the Franco dictatorship, the Entrepeñas and Buendía reservoirs, located in Guadalajara and between Guadalajara and Cuenca respectively, were built to supply electricity to Madrid and regulate the water flow of the Tagus River.

These reservoirs, plus Bolarque, Zorita, Almoguera, and Estremera, came to be known as the "Sea of Castilla". In the mid-1960s, due to its proximity to the Spanish capital, the area became popular among domestic tourists, turning into a mass phenomenon. Thus, the locals, whose fertile lands had been expropriated and flooded, found a new livelihood. Restaurants, hotels, and luxury housing developments were constructed surrounded to the villages in the area, and water activities became common.

The Tagus-Segura transfer project was resumed in 1967 when it was incorporated into the "Joint draft of the Hydraulic Resources of Central and Southeast Spain - Tagus-Segura Complex." It was finally inaugurated during the democratic period in 1979.

This infrastructure, one of the most important in the country, connects the courses of the Tagus and Segura rivers. Receiving the water from Entrepeñas and Buendía, the transfer begins at the Bolarque reservoir where the water is pumped to overcome a drop of 245m and, after a journey of 292km, ends at the Talave reservoir in Albacete.

Thanks to this infrastructure, the provinces of Murcia, Alicante, and Almería have come to be known as "Europe's orchard" due to their agricultural production. However, in the donor provinces, the water level in the reservoirs has dropped from an average of 70-80% to 30-40%, severely affecting tourism, which is the driving force of the local economy. The era of reservoir splendor has been left behind, and riverside villages are struggling to survive.

However, it would not be fair to attribute all the responsibility for this decline to the Tagus-Segura transfer. The increase in global temperatures, which in turn leads to greater evaporation, increasingly irregular precipitation, and more intense droughts, has placed 75-80% of the Spanish territory at risk of desertification.

Currently I'm trying to answer some questions about the topic: Why did these communities build all this tourist-focused economy in a dry area? Did they think it was a good idea knowing a transfer was being built?

Not for sale

Artist Bio

Jorge Pérez Higuera was born in Guadalajara (Spain). He received his BA from Complutense University of Madrid, and his MFA from the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

Jorge's practice has focused primarily on decontextualizing the daily routine which is based on the observation and analysis of human behavior and its archetypes. His work tries to capture the result of his observation through reproductions which place authenticity over reality. Considering diverse models, he prefers those coming from the popular culture (cinema, television, comics, literature...) due to their power to create new personalities society can identify with.

Jorge's photographs have been exhibited internationally and have been published, such as Wired, CNN, BBC, The Telegraph or El Mundo among others, and are included in many private collections.