

ANTONI TÀPIES

Les Armes d'Éros

23 November 2023 - 13 January 2024
Opening on Thursday 23 November at 6pm

13 rue de Téhéran
75008 Paris

Gallery and bookshop



Gran triangle, 1990
Paint and varnish on canvas, 285 x 390 cm
© Successió Antoni Tàpies. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.

Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) would have been 100 years old on 13 December. When he first exhibited at 13 rue de Téhéran in 1967, at the request of Jacques Dupin, he was 44 years old. It was a different time. Censorship still existed in France, Rivette's film *La Religieuse* was banned, as were a good number of books published by Pauvert or Losfeld; but it was a different matter in Spain, where the artist lived, then under Franco's yoke, where moral order and the denial of regional cultures reigned. Tàpies' work was a sharp departure from all that: its materialist vigour, its expressive edge and its insistence on "Catalanness" were disturbing. Not least because his work was permeated by an eroticism that was often underlying, but sometimes brutally expressed. *Implicit/Explicit* was the title of one of his paintings.

Galerie Lelong & Co. had the honour of regularly exhibiting this great artist until his death in 2012, and always showing his most recent works. The gallery then continued to work with the artist's family, organising various exhibitions. We had never before placed an exhibition under the sign of Éros, of the sexed and fragmented body, of the omnipresent sensuality in his work. Tàpies, a highly cultured artist, was well acquainted with Georges Bataille's final book, *Les Larmes d'Éros* published in Paris in 1961. There is no doubt that the book's iconography fed the imagination of this artist, who was a devotee of images drawn from cultures around the world. We have taken the liberty of slightly modifying Bataille's beautiful title as a gift to Tàpies in the year of his centenary.

Les Armes d'Éros presents a group of a dozen paintings on wood and canvas, made up of assemblages of various objects and materials emblematic of the artist's work: sand, varnish, paint, pencils, etc. They cover the period between 1990 and 2010, the last decades during which Tàpies pursued the formal and material experimentation that had always been at the heart of his practice. They illustrate the aesthetic culmination of his work. Including *Gran Triangle*, 1990 (285 x 390 cm), *Somier sobre rombe*, 1993 (282 x 282 x 9 cm), *Imatge en negre*, 1996 (130 x 195 cm), *Boca sobre tors*, 2007 (162 x 130 cm), *Mirall de vernis*, 2010 (116 x 89 cm), *Matèria sinuosa*, 2010 (160 x 160 cm), these works illustrate the artist's final research in a range of formats, from 60 cm to almost 3 metres. The exhibition was made possible by the exceptional collaboration between the gallery and the artist's estate. A selection of the artist's prints will also be on display in the gallery's bookshop.

MEDIA RELATIONS

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Antoni Tàpies

Painter, sculptor, essayist and theorist of a Catalan expression of Spanish art, Antoni Tàpies (b. 1923, Barcelona - d. 2012, Barcelona) is considered one of the most important Spanish artists of the 20th century and one of the main exponents of *Art Informel*.

A self-taught artist who was profoundly affected by the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War, Tàpies decided to devote himself to art in the early 1940s following a serious lung infection that forced him to spend two years convalescing. During that time, he painted and drew while pursuing an interest in the history of philosophy and Romantic music. His work combines tradition and innovation in an abstract style that is not devoid of symbolism, giving great importance and relevance to the material substratum of the work. In his work, the material medium transcends its condition to signify a profound analysis of the human condition, belying a spiritual dimension.

His first solo exhibition took place in 1950 at Galerías Layetanas in Barcelona. He quickly moved towards abstraction and, long before *Arte Povera*, incorporated non-academic materials (i.e. organic plant matter, earth and stone debris) into his work. From 1953 onwards, he was one of the first to embrace the idea of mixing materials, adding powdered clay and marble to his paintings, and using torn paper, rope and rags.

By the mid-1950s, his reputation had become international, and he took part in the Venice Biennale in 1952. His work is enriched by political references in the form of symbols and words written on the various media. From the 1970s onwards, he incorporated more large-scale materials, such as pieces of furniture, into his work. In 2000, he designed the official poster for the French Open tennis tournament, and illustrated the 7025th edition of the newspaper *Libération*, dated 13 and 14 December 2003, with eleven original works and a complete alphabet of lettering.

Antoni Tàpies published several texts, including *La pratique de l'art* (Gallimard), *L'art et ses lieux* (Galerie Lelong) as well as *La réalité comme art* (Galerie Lelong).

Throughout his career, Tàpies received numerous awards and distinctions, including the Wolf Foundation Prize (1981), the Gold Medal of the Government (Generalitat) of Catalonia (1983), the Prince of Asturias Prize for the Arts (1990), the UNESCO Picasso Medal (1993) and the Velázquez Prize for the Plastic Arts (2003). In recognition of his artistic career, King Juan Carlos I awarded him the title of Marquis de Tàpies on 9 April 2010.

Antoni Tàpies Centenary celebrations

The exhibition *Antoni Tàpies. The Practice of Art* at Bozar in Brussels (Belgium) will be presented until 7 January 2024. The exhibition will then be shown in an enlarged version at the Reina Sofía in Madrid, then in Barcelona at the Tàpies Foundation.

To celebrate the centenary of the artist's birth, the Fundació Antoni Tàpies will present a program of exhibitions, publications, educational activities, events and creative and research projects. It will run for one year, from 13 December 2023 to 13 December 2024. The *Tàpies Year* will underline the Fundació's commitment to an in-depth examination of the artist's work and thought, on a national and international scale, while providing updated readings and an opening up of new perspectives on his work.

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