

Mari Chordà, a pioneering feminist artist

Works from 1962 to 1972

26/11/2021 - 21/1/2022

This exhibition pays tribute to the artistic career and work of Mari Chordà (Amposta, 1942) with a selection of 14 pieces created between 1962 and 1972. A painter, poet and publisher, Chordà was a pioneer in the visual expression of the female body, female sexuality and the experience of maternity from a feminist perspective. The artist developed her most characteristic and personal art personal art subverting pop aesthetics and influenced by her experience living in Paris.

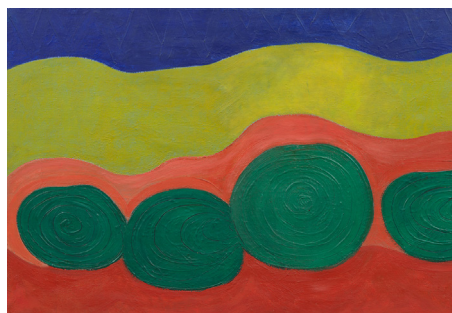
In the years from 1960-70, for an artist and feminist the commitment was both political and personal. As the curator Chus Martínez wrote: “Chordà’s interest in shape is simply the expression of her passion for life”.

Chordà was a pioneer, painting representations of female genitals for the first time in 1964, when she was still a student and was participating in the revolts against the Franco regime, at a time when the revolution of feminist was just emerging. Her inspiration for the series “Vaginals” (“Vaginal”) arose from the desire to inhabit her own body, to recover it from the patriarchy, exploring taboo concepts of femininity and generating new references. In the present exhibition this series is represented by the works *Líquids* (Liquids) (1964), *Llàgrimes* (Tears) (1966), and the seminal 1968 painting *Vulva*. Chordà used what she describes as a “non-figurative language, somewhere between abstraction and close-up photography”, allowing her to capture her view of her own body from a physiological perspective which only she could have: from the inside out. The resulting images are fluid and suggestive: the artist plays with the relativity between shape and colour, changing our perception and our engagement with our own subconscious while we try to make sense of the anatomical shapes.

On the other hand, two large-format works, *Vola, vola* (*Fly, fly*) (1964) and *Garriga II* (1965) show the



Vulva
(1968)
Wax on
cardboard
48 × 62 cm



Garriga II
(1965)
Oil on canvas
89 × 130 cm

importance of her most familiar landscape: the River Ebro and the Montsià. Thus, in *Garriga II* we observe how she represents the holm oaks of the Sierra del Montsià as a dense material filling with sgraffito spirals inside. “Oval or circular shapes in an incipient organic abstraction, which are embedded on the plane as if they were eggs being incubated in the folds of serene mountain waves” is how art historian Assumpta Bassas describes

it in the catalogue of the 2017 exhibition “*Llots i torbes*”, indicating her interest in the subject of the fecundity and fertility of the land and of the lives of women.

In 1965, she moved to Paris and her palette changed drastically on discovering artists linked to the New Realism and Pop Art movements, especially Niki de Saint Phalle. She found the abundance of colour in the



Colors
(1969)
Polychrome
wood
99 cm ø

work of this creator to be powerful and convincing, and Chordà reaffirmed her use of increasingly bright and bold colours, which “force you to stop and look at them”. She never formed part of the Pop Art movement and actively sought ways to counteract the *voyeurism* inherent in many American Pop Art works, which represented women as sex objects.

This aesthetic reached its peak in the playful series “Joguets” (“Toys”), represented here by *Colors* (1969) and *Ous de felina* (Feline eggs) (1969). These polychrome wood sculptures are inspired by a game for children that she played with her daughter Àngela, in which coloured pieces can be placed in several holes forming different combinations. In the same way as Lucio Fontana’s series “La Fine di Dio” (“The End of God”) represented the infinite and the inconceivable for the Italian artist, with the series “Joguets” Mari Chordà raises the status of these toys to art, placing her role as mother and creator literally at the centre of her practice, and figuratively in the hands of her daughter.

L'artista

Mari Chordà (Amposta, 1942) On the fringes of the patriarchal doctrines that still prevailed under Franco, Chordà decided to study at the Escola de Belles Arts de Barcelona, where she began to experiment with pictorial representations of the female body. She took an active part in feminist movements from the late 1960s onwards. In 1968 she founded the cultural centre “Lo Llar” in her native city. In 1977 she co-founded the legendary Bar-Feminist-Library



“laSal” in Barcelona and the first feminist publishing house in Spain: “laSal Edicions de les Dones”, where she published the book of poems *Quadern del cos i l'aigua* (Notebook of the body and water) (1978) with drawings by Montse Clavé.

Recently her work was exhibited at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) and at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) in 2019, at the Tate Modern (London) in 2015, at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León in 2006, and monographic exhibitions like *Llots i torbes* at Lo Pati in Amposta, in 2017. Her work forms part of the permanent collection of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), of the MACBA and the MNAC (Barcelona). She has also published *Locomotora infidel pel passat* (Locomotive unfaithful to the past) (1988) and *Umbilicals* (Umbilicals) (2000).

Mayoral

Gallery specialised in Post-War art founded in Barcelona in 1989. In November 2019, Mayoral opened a second gallery in Paris. The gallery articulates an exhibition programme focused on Informalism and Post-War art, both Catalan and Spanish, with artists such as Tàpies, Chillida, Millares, Saura, Guerrero, Zóbel, Canogar, Rivera and Francés. At the same time, the gallery also exhibits the work of key twentieth-century avant-garde artists such as Miró and Picasso.

It develops projects that are rigorously curated and grow out of an exhaustive process of research based on original documentation. The gallery relies upon the support of the artists' families, foundations and other institutions whose mission resides in preserving and publicising the legacy of the artists they represent. Likewise, it enjoys the complicity of many collectors and

museums, both public and private, when it comes to accomplishing its mission. The gallery participates in art fairs such as Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Basel Hong Kong, TEFAF Maastricht, TEFAF New York and ARCOmadrid.