
Postwar Art in Spain

Joan Brossa, Luis Feito, Manolo Millares
Antonio Saura & Antoni Tàpies

Galeria Mayoral

About the show

We are pleased and proud to present this exhibition on the art of the Spanish postwar years, featuring exceptional works by Brossa, Feito, Millares, Saura and Tàpies in London. It is an exhibition with links to the group show that took place in 1962 at the Tate Gallery, in which this disruptive generation presented its new artistic experiments in the UK capital, just as it had done earlier in New York (with exhibitions at the MoMA and the Guggenheim), at documenta in Kassel and at the biennials in Venice, São Paulo and Paris. The show embraces eleven paintings and four poem-objects, including the canvas *253* by Luis Feito, exhibited in 1962 at TATE exhibition *Modern Spanish Painting*; two large-scale canvases by Antonio Saura from 1959 and an accurate selection of early mixed-media composition by Antoni Tàpies.

These artists shared an urge to seek new forms to express the concerns of their era and to contemporize a legacy expressed in a masterly manner by El Greco, Velázquez and Goya, and also by Picasso and Miró. Through art, they conveyed the existential suffering of

their generation, occasioned by the injustice, oppression and uncertainty which defined 20th century politics. This group strived to combat the status quo by speaking out and rebelling against it. They struggled against an artistic canon that was obsolete following the wars of the opening half of the 20th century, with the advent of Art Informel and Abstract Expressionism.

It is a privilege to present this exhibition in the legendary Colnaghi gallery, with which we share a love of the archive and the library; of sampling art with rigour, research, passion and enthusiasm; of renewing discourses; and of promoting culture and bringing it to new audiences.

On this occasion we present a publication that includes the contributions of Vicenç Altaió [cultural activist, writer and the President of the Joan Brossa Foundation] and an interview by Elena Sorokina [curator and art historian, currently working at HISK, the Higher Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent, Belgium] with the artist Luis Feito, the last surviving artist among the ones represented in this exhibition.

Mayoral at Colnaghi

26 Bury Street
London SW1Y 6AL - UK

Opening hours - From 26/02 to 09/03/18

Monday to Friday 10am–6pm
Saturday & Sunday 11am–6pm

Abstract from the interview between the art curator Elena Sorokina and the artist Luis Feito

Elena Sorokina: Could you tell me about an exhibition experience you consider important for you personally?

Luis Feito: Yes, it was Venice in 1960. I occupied the most important place in the pavilion, I had prepared it very well, and it was extraordinary. We took fourteen big canvases and they were only able to hang ten, because there wasn't space for more. The other four were kept in a warehouse, but even those four were sold, absolutely everything got sold. It was pretty extraordinary because I was very young. I remember that one of the people who gave me most pleasure in buying my work was Visconti, the film director, who was with an Italian princess who also bought a painting. Later on, Visconti put this painting in *Boccaccio '70* (1962), with Romy Schneider, and of course for me that was marvellous, because as far as I was concerned within the world of cinema Visconti was extraordinary.

ES: In *Boccaccio '70* one of your paintings features prominently just behind Romy Schneider stylishly smoking a cigarette! Your international recognition started in Paris and you left Spain and went to live there in 1955. How was your life and work in Paris? Who was important for you there? Who helped you? Did you meet any artists from the El Paso group in the French capital?

LF: Travelling to Paris was fundamental at that time, everybody went to Paris, but there were very few of us who held out there. At the time it was still the artistic cultural centre of Europe, but a lot of energy was required to hold out. When I arrived in Paris there was nobody to lend me a hand, I had to do everything the hard way, it was very tough. Then I managed to have a solo show at the Galerie Arnaud in 1955 and everything took off from there. Being in Paris I coincided with Antonio Saura, who was also living there before founding the El Paso group.

ES: Who was important for you in New York and what happened with your work there? Would you say it had changed?

LF: It was there that I decided to work on my painting, but apart from the galleries this was a sabbatical period for me. And of course it meant a change for me. New York meant being closer to the West, which fascinated me. It was easier for me to go to Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. Everything has an influence, everything you experience, wherever it is you live. Although in my work there are never concrete references, everything is interiorized and emerges when it needs to emerge.

ES: In this context, how would you describe your work, your creative process and its changes? How do you consider the role of the texture, of the volume in your work?

LF: The material labour is of the simplest, I always seek after a certain simplicity, less is more, working directly on the white canvas with the least possible number of corrections. It's very difficult to say how I work because I also try and make each painting a bit different to the one before. First you have to know how to paint, and once painting is mastered, the craft, the colour, the space, the drawing, everything, what one wants to do at any one moment emerges naturally. In my work of the 1960s relief is also produced because the colour is mixed with sand to give volume to certain parts of the body, but later I stopped doing that because I'm interested in advancing my artistic process, I am interested in experiment. I consider my technique to be very simple, but the simpler it is the more difficult it is as well. But to me, thinking of technical questions is rather uninteresting, and I don't give much importance to it because the final result is what's most important. In a canvas the last thing one should see is material labour, when one sees the technique above all else that's bad. Art is something that emerges, which is simply there.

About Mayoral

Mayoral is an art gallery founded in Barcelona in 1989 that specialises in Modern and Post-War art. Its exhibition programme is structured around leading artists of the 20th century, among them Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, Alexander Calder, Eduardo Chillida, Manolo Millares, Antonio Saura, Antoni Tàpies, Joan Brossa and Luis Feito. The gallery pursues projects that are meticulously curated. It is supported by the families of the artists, as well as by foundations and other institutions whose mission is to preserve and raise awareness of the legacies left by the artists. It also enjoys the trust of international public and private collectors and museums.

Postwar Spanish Art is Mayoral's third project in London, following the success of the pop-up shows **Miró's Studio** (2016) and **Art Revolutionaries** (2017).
