

Antoni Tàpies
Theatre

Exhibition
25.10.2019–19.4.2020



FUNDACIÓ ANTONI TÀPIES

This exhibition shows for the first time the relationship between Antoni Tàpies and the performing arts. It includes several forms of collaboration or evocation of the theatre world, and gives an outstanding role to the scenographic designs that Tàpies conceived. These projects are in tune with the main body of his work, since they employ the same materials and most of the images that interest him. However, by disregarding the spatial allusions typical of traditional scenographic language, they are more radical in their approach and evocative capabilities.



Or i sal, 1961. © Fotos Barceló, 2019.



Semimaru, 1966. © Bosch, 2019.

Between 1961 and 1989, Tàpies created stage sets for five productions. With the first three, *Or i sal* (1961), *Semimaru* (1966) and *L'armari en el mar* (1978), he contributed to the regeneration of the Catalan theatre at a time when, freed of the onslaught of the Franco regime, it was aiming to connect with modernity and find its place within the European scene. *Johnny va agafar el seu fusell* (1989), premièred after the restoration of democracy at the Mercat de les Flors, one of the first public spaces dedicated to the performing arts. *L'Éboulement* (1982) was part of a theatrical experience developed in alternative spaces in Paris.

Tàpies, an artist committed to the avant-garde, put his artistic language at the service of theatrical representation, ephemeral by nature. For *Or i Sal*, by the poet Joan Brossa, Tàpies designed four austere sets using paper, cardboard, rope and clothing, incorporating familiar images drawn from the artist's imaginary, such as a door, a table, the X, a ladder and knotted garments, and exposing the wooden frame of the stage machinery.

Tàpies' intervention in the Japanese noh theatre play *Semimaru*, which featured music by the composer Josep M. Mestres Quadreny, consisted of two lengths of rope crossing the stage from one side to the other, forming an X. From these ropes were hung a white knotted handkerchief and a cane. Four years later, Tàpies returned to this idea of the rope and the knot. In the foyer of the St Gallen theatre (Switzerland) he installed a painting hung at an angle with a rope tied to each corner of the canvas, from which four pieces of red cloth hung. Tàpies called it *Gran esquinçall* (Large Tatter), in reference to the last verse of the poem by Josep Carner 'El més vell del poble', which evokes the Catalan flag.

For *L'armari en el mar*, by Brossa and Mestres Quadreny, Tàpies hung the black tailcoats of the musicians in the manner of drop scenes, while the orchestra played below in their shirtsleeves. The three artists collaborated again on the operatic project *Cap de mirar*, which was to have premièred at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in 1991, although several circumstances prevented it.

L'Éboulement, by the poet and art critic Jacques Dupin, was presented in a kind of warehouse as part of the theatre cycle *Les Intérieurs. Théâtres d'appartement*. Tàpies used white sheets, rope and some coloured marks, such as the red footprints of a foot, numbers and the names of the characters in the play written on the wall.

For the set of *Johnny va agafar el seu fusell*, a theatrical adaptation of the novel *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo, Tàpies displayed on a canvas various elements from his own visual language, such as a bedhead, the outline of a chair and amputated body parts. These elements represented the state of the protagonist of this anti-war text, a soldier severely mutilated in the First World War who, back at home, reflects on the horrors of war.

However, Tàpies' relationship with the theatre is not limited to set designs alone, but takes various other forms also featured in the exhibition. The 1950s is especially rich in such interventions. In the January-February 1950 issue of the magazine *Dau al Set*, a selection of paratheatrical texts by Joan Brossa coexist with reproductions of Tàpies' drawings evoking the secrets of theatrical artifice, especially those referring to the world of magic: hidden spaces, drawers and cabinets that open and close with a key.

In the theatrical narration by Joan Brossa, *Carnaval escampat o la invasió desfeta* (1950), Tàpies, Modest Cuixart and Joan Ponç appeared as characters. Although not written with the intention of it being staged, the text states that, during the performance, programmes designed by Tàpies were to be distributed.

The drawing *Estudi per a un personatge d'una obra de Brossa* (Study for a Character in a Play by Brossa, 1952) represents a character playing with a diaboló. It is likely that the play referred to by the title is Brossa's *Esquerdes, parracs, enderrocs esberlant la figura* (1947), in which two harlequins discuss on a diaboló. The drawing is shown here for the first time since it was included in Tàpies' solo exhibition at the Galeries Laietanes in 1952. That same year, Tàpies played the role of the harlequin in Brossa's *Nocturns encontres*, performed at the Teatre del Cercle de Mataró under the direction of Josep Centelles.

From the same period are the so-called sessions of 'caligarisms', a term used by Brossa to define a kind of improvised cabaret performances, which were put on at the end of private gatherings in the studio of Modest Cuixart or at the home of Leopoldo Pomés, both in Barcelona. The actors were Antoni Tàpies, Modest Cuixart, Joan Brossa, Joan Ponç, Leopoldo Pomés and Pere Portabella. With small modifications to costumes and even a touch of makeup, they were transformed into characters, such as a conjuror in the case



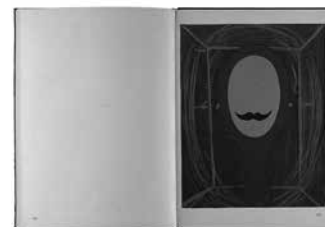
L'armari en el mar, 1978. © Fotos Barceló, 2019.



Johnny va agafar el seu fusell, 1989.



L'Éboulement, 1982. © Agence de presse Bernard, Paris, 2019.



Frègoli, 1969. Of the work: © Comissió Tàpies / VEGAP, 2019. Of the photography: © Lluís Bover, 2019.

of Brossa or a professional dancer in Portabella's case. Tàpies played the role of a vociferous and spastic character, howling like a madman. These sessions, full of imagination and poetry, were inspired by certain German Expressionist films of the 1920s.

In 1960, Club 49 initiated the 'Open Music' cycle with the aim of organizing concerts of contemporary music. Some of these were held at La Ricarda, the home of Ricard Gomis in Prat de Llobregat. One such concert was the musical action *Concert per a representar* (1964), with a libretto by Joan Brossa and music by Josep M. Mestres Quadreny. Tàpies made a drawing for the invitation. Seeking to subvert the established theatrical models, the 'musical actions' of Brossa and Mestres Quadreny were short pieces with both a theatrical and musical component.

Brossa and Tàpies dedicated a collector's book to the Italian actor and quick-change artist Leopoldo Fregoli. *Frègoli* (1969) combines diverse documents, such as postcards, photographs, programmes and illustrations, with Brossa's poems and Tàpies' lithographs. It is a tribute to the world of theatre with its wealth of effects and illusion.

Tàpies and Brossa also shared a passion for Richard Wagner, who revived the opera genre. In 1988, they produced the collector's book *Carrer de Wagner*, a homage to the composer that consisted of a series of Brossa's poems and a set of etchings by Tàpies. In addition, Tàpies dedicated two works to Wagner, *Homenatge a Wagner* (Homage to Wagner, 1969) and *Urbilder (diptic)* (Urbilder (diptych)).

The exhibition features paintings, drawings, prints, collector's books, photographs, letters, magazines, programmes, invitations, press articles and audiovisual material. It also includes a selection of Tàpies' works made at the same time as his set-designs and closely related in terms of the materials used, the similarity with a theatrical curtain, and the way the artist exposes the painting's stretcher as if it were the backstage.

This exhibition is both part of the celebrations for *Brossa Year*, and a tribute to Josep M. Mestres Quadreny on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

Set designs

Or i sal

Author: Joan Brossa

Director: Frederic Roda

Cast: Carles Sala, Francesc Nubiola, Miquel Gimeno, Joaquim Canals, Antoni Millà, Alexandre Aixelà, Joan Zanny, Maria Rosa Fàbregas, Manuel Rodés, Jaume Pla, Elisenda Sala, Jordi Torras, Adelaida Espinal, Natàlia Solernou, Núria Casulleras

Set design: Antoni Tàpies

Première: 18 May 1961 at the Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona, as part of the IV Cicle de Teatre organized by the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona with the support of Club 49

Semimaru

Author: Yūsaki Saburō Motokiyo Zeami

Director: Lluís Solà

Music: Josep M. Mestres Quadreny

Cast: Jordi Torras, Sefa Ponsatí, Àngel Company, Joan Oller, Elies Mas, Joaquim Canals, Lluís Quinquer, Josep Navarra

Musicians: Juli Panyella (clarinet), Salvador Gratacós (flute), Robert Armengol (percussion) and Salvador Gómez (generator)

Set design: Antoni Tàpies

Make-up: Antoni Bernad

Première: 17 June 1966 at the Teatre de l'Aliança del Poblenou, Barcelona

L'armari en el mar

Libretto: Joan Brossa

Music: Josep M. Mestres Quadreny

Musical direction: Carles Santos

Stage direction: Fabià Puigserver and Guillem-Jordi Graells

Cast: Imma Colomer, Laura Culat, Christa Leem, Pep Anton Muñoz, Sílvia Munt, Albert Penas, Carlota Soldevila, Jordi Vilà

Set design: Antoni Tàpies

Production: Grup Instrumental Català for the International Music Festival, Barcelona

Première: 17 October 1978 at the Teatre Lliure, Barcelona

L'Éboulement

Author: Jacques Dupin

Director: Jacques Guimet

Cast: Jacques Guimet, Francis Arnaud, Florence Carrière, Monique Terret, Martine Pascal

Set design: Antoni Tàpies

Organization: Théâtre-Création-Espace, Alpha-FNAC and Centre américain

Première: 4 February 1982 as part of *Les Intérieurs. Théâtres d'appartement*, Paris

Johnny va agafar el seu fusell

Author: Dalton Trumbo

Director: Josep Costa

Cast: Pep Munné

Set design: Antoni Tàpies

Première: 18 April 1989 at the Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona. From 26 September – 15 October 1989, it was performed at the Teatre Poliorama, Barcelona

Activities

VISITS

Approximations

Guided visits to the exhibitions currently on show.

Dates: Fridays (except Holidays), at 18.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h 15 min. | **Language:** Catalan. | **Admission:** free with museum entrance ticket. | Advance booking not required. Limited places.

Parla, parla

Guided visits

Parla, parla (Speak, speak, 1992), is the title of a work by Antoni Tàpies. It covers a series of visits and talks around the exhibitions currently on show.

Guided visit by Glòria Bordons, Vice-president for Studies at the Fundació Joan Brossa.

Dates: Friday 6 March 2020, 18.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h. | **Admission:** 8 €. | Limited places. Advance booking: 934 870 315 / amics@ftapies.com.

Exclusive visit for the Friends of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies

With Núria Homs, curator of the exhibition.

Dates: Thursday 7 November 2019, at 18.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h. | **Language:** Catalan. | **Admission:** free for Friends of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. | Limited places. Advance booking: 934 870 315 / amics@ftapies.com.

Visit to Casa Gomis

Casa Gomis, designed by the architect Antoni Bonet Castellana, is an example of rationalist architecture in Catalonia. Ricardo Gomis' passion for music was one of the influential factors in conceptualizing the design of the house. Opened in 1963, Casa Gomis became a privileged space for creating, exhibiting and meeting the cultural

avant-garde, and hosted a part of the musical and theatrical activities organized by Club 49.

Calendar: Saturday 28 March 2020. More information at: www.fundaciotaopies.org.

FAMILY WORKSHOP

Theatre, masks and carnivals

Masks are among the elements that give rise to the creation of characters and games involving interpretation. They are, therefore, an integral part of the theatre. We find them in Tàpies' universe because they are fundamental to Japanese Noh theatre, Dadaism and the actions of artists linked to the magazine *Dau al Set*. Coinciding with Carnival, we are organizing a family workshop in which we will be creating masks using recycled material, and where we will be inspired by Tàpies to give new life to everyday waste material while creating new characters.

Date: Saturday, 22 February 2020, at 11.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h and 30 min. | Age group: Accompanied children from 4 years old. | **Price:** 4 € per person. | Limited places. Prior registration: reserves@ftapies.com.

ACTIVITIES CENTRING ON CONSERVATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

What can we learn from the backs of works of art?

What information is hidden on the back of a work of art? Normally we do not have the opportunity to see this part of the work. Whether the piece is in an exhibition or is reproduced in a catalogue, the back is always hidden. This talk will uncover the important data located on the back of artworks, such as: its technical history, the signature of the artist, any restoration interventions, its origins and the story of its life.

Talk by Mònica Marull, restorer at the Fundació.

Date: Thursday 17 October 2019, 18.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h. | **Language:** Catalan. | **Admission:** € 8. | Limited places. Advance booking: activitats@ftapies.com.

Transport and packing of artworks: protecting them for the journey

Artworks from the Fundació often travel to be part of temporary exhibitions in other museums and institutions around the world. The packing of each piece is performed according to its particular characteristics and the type of transport used, whether truck, plane or ship. The objective is to ensure the work does not undergo any changes in the conditions necessary for its correct conservation. This talk will show some of the most commonly used materials employed when packing artworks and will discuss the different transport options offered by specialised companies. Talk by Mònica Marull, restorer at the Fundació.

Date: Thursday 21 November 2019, 18.00 h. | **Duration:** 1 h. | **Language:** Catalan. | **Admission:** 8 €. | Limited places. Advance booking: activitats@ftapies.com.

You can find information about other activities on the web fundaciotaopies.org or in the Education and Public Programs brochure.

Frègoli, 1969. Of the work: © Comissió Tàpies / VEGAP, 2019. Of the photography: © Lluís Bover, 2019. DL: B 24527-2019

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