

An abstract black and white artwork featuring a large, dark, irregular shape that resembles a splash or a blotch. The background is white, and the dark shape has several thin, vertical drips extending downwards from its bottom edge. There are also some smaller splatters and marks scattered around the main shape, particularly towards the top and right sides. The overall effect is one of raw, expressive energy.

SPANISH
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millares
saura
feito
tàpies

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24 CORK STREET London W1S 3NJ t: 0207 439 6633

e: info@adamgallery.com www.adamgallery.com

We are delighted to present this collection of works celebrating abstract Spanish art of the twentieth century. Included are works by some of the key artists from the post-war abstract movements such as Antonio Saura (1930-1998) and Antoni Tàpies (b. 1923) as well as Luis Feito (b. 1929) and Manolo Millares (1921-1972). These artists represent Spain at its most powerful, passionate and profound. A sense of cruelty, magnificence, anxiety and mysticism unites their work. They are driven to search for the highest truths and cannot separate the material from the spiritual, or the temporal from the eternal.

These artists are proponents of 'art autre' or 'informal art' – a term that first appeared at an exhibition in a Paris gallery in 1951 to describe the work of young European painters who provided an alternative to the geometric abstractions popular after World War II. Informalism grouped together a series of artistic styles using symbols and a variety of materials as well as gestural or calligraphic painting. Most importantly, this group wanted to move the emphasis in their work away from theory or concept and instead to focus on the absolute prominence of plasticity or the pictorial material.

In Spain, the informalist trend developed in 1957 with the Madrid based group El Paso (The Passage), formed by artists including Antonio Saura, Manolo Millares, Luis Feito and Rafael Canogar. The dynamism of this young group had a profound impact on European art that is still felt today. The informalist trend also had an impact on the Catalanian, Barcelona based group Dau al Set – of which Antoni Tàpies was a leading member. Their art was also easily identifiable with the 'black Spain' of the time: an art that (in the words of Millares) "destroys itself so as to rebuild itself ipso facto from its ruins".

We would like to express our gratitude to Luis Feito, the Fundació Antonio Saura, Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Acquavella Gallery for assistance with this exhibition.

The 'El Paso' group: Chirino, Canogar, Feito, Saura, Riviera, Ayllón, Millares, Viola, Madrid 1957



millares

Manolo MILLARES (1926-1972)

Born in the Canary Islands and largely self-taught as an artist, Millares was initially influenced by Surrealism and archaeology – particularly the rituals, symbols and textiles of the indigenous inhabitants of the Canary Islands. In 1953, he moved to Madrid and focused on abstraction, with a palette primarily of black and white. Millares often juxtaposed the construction of a picture with the destruction of its materials (tearing or ripping sackcloth, for example, or creating holes and stitching them up) to explore themes of human suffering, anguish and redemption. His art was “an art of explosion and protest” and “a passionate means of express[ing]” the idea that through destruction, something better can be built. The paintings in this exhibition are from the early 1960s, and show Millares using pure expressive gestures. Some critics have seen the transition from the predominance of black in his early works, to the emphasis on white in his later works as very significant – particularly the pre-eminence of white in the final works produced just before his death.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 1960 First solo exhibition in America: at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York
- 1961 Millares publishes the article entitled “Destruction-Construction in my pictures”
- 1975 Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Madrid
- 1992 Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, Madrid
Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderna, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- 2003 Sociedad Estatal para la Accion Cultural Exterior, Madrid



1. 'Untitled'

Oil on paper
1961

Signed 'MILLARES'
50 x 70 cm (19 1/2 x 27 1/2 in)

Provenance: Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York
Acquavella Gallery, New York



2. 'Untitled'

Gouache on paper
1962

70 x 50 cm (27 1/2 x 19 1/2 in)

Provenance: Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York
Acquavella Gallery, New York





3. 'Untitled'

Gouache on paper
1959

Signed 'MILLARES'

50 x 70 cm (19 1/2 x 27 1/2 in)

Provenance: Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York
Acquavella Gallery, New York



4. 'Untitled'

Gouache on paper
1962

50 x 70 cm (19 1/2 x 27 1/2 in)

Provenance: Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York
Acquavella Gallery, New York



saura

Antonio SAURA (1930–1998)

Antonio Saura was born in Huesca, Aragon in 1930. He began to paint, self-taught, in 1947 during a long illness. Working in complete isolation in a surrealist style, he made paintings of a mysterious, poetic world inhabited only by monstrous organic forms. His first one-man exhibition was at the Galeria Buchholz, Madrid, 1951. He spent 1954–5 in Paris, experimenting with new techniques and materials, and adopting a gestural, automatist manner of painting, showing a parallel with the work of Jackson Pollock and contemporary action painting. The brutal suppression of student demonstrations shortly after his return to Madrid in 1955 led him to adopt a violently expressionist style: taking forms inspired by the human body as his starting-point and working almost entirely in black and white. His figures can be graphically violent and humorous – in the tradition of Goya.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 1966 Institute of Contemporary Arts. London
- 1980 Fundación Joan Miró, CEAC. Barcelona
- 1990 Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Madrid
- 2003 Antonio Saura / Damas : Obra sobre papel Fundación Juan March Museo de Arte Español Contemporáneo Palma de Mallorca, Spain
- 2005 Songe et mensonge / Une parabole moderne (1958 – 1962) d'Antonio Saura les Abattoirs Toulouse, France
- 2005 Itinerarios de Antonio Saura Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Madrid, Spain

Prizes

- 1960 John Solomon Guggenheim Fellowship Award - New York
- 1964 Carnegie Prize - United States
- 1994 Premio Aragón - Alcolea de Cinca, Huesca, Spain

Antonio Saura with Luis Feito, Cuenca 1957



5. 'Pac'

Mixed media on paper
1996
Signed in pencil and dated
41 x 31 cm (16 x 12 1/4 in)





Antonio Saura, Miró, Canogar and Millares 1959

6. 'Autodafé'

Mixed media
1985

Signed in pencil and dated
31 x 50.5 cm (12 1/4 x 19 7/8 in)

Provenance: Galerie Lauter, Mannheim.



7. 'Adàn y Eva'

Mixed media on paper
1959

Signed and inscribed
70 x 50 cm (27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in)

Provenance: Private collection, Madrid



feito

Luis FEITO (b. 1929)

Feito was born in Madrid, and attended the San Fernando School of Fine Art there in 1950. Initially he worked figuratively, but in 1954 he held his first exhibition of abstract work at the Galeria Fernando Fe, Madrid. In 1956 he moved to Paris and was influenced by the Automatism movement that was prevalent there. Throughout his life, Feito has been drawn to a rich variety of sources for his inspiration: from African and Asian 'primitive' art to Native American Indian artefacts. He works on canvas or paper using oil and sand in monochromatic scale colours, such as black, white and ochre. In 1962 a new colour appeared in his paintings – red – often used in circular forms. Feito's use of bold gestures, light and contrasting bi-tonal colours are key to the power of his paintings. He has always searched to simplify his practice; creating a silent and contemplative space where the inner light of his colours can reach us.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 1964 Retrospective, Hamburg Museum, Hamburg
- 1965 Tacoma Museum, Washington
- 1966 Chaux-de-Fonds Museum, Switzerland
- 1968 Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal
- 1969 Quebec Museum, Quebec
- 1977 Museum of Modern Art, Bilbao
- 1988 Museum of Contemporary Art, Madrid
- 2002 Retrospective exhibition at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Prizes

- 1993 Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters, France
- 1998 Gold Medal of Fine Arts, Spain
- 2001 Critics Prize, Estampa, Madrid
- 2002 AECA Grand Prize, Arco, Madrid





8. 'Untitled'

Gouache on paper
1960

Signed Feito. Signed and dated verso also
30.5 x 40.5 cm (12 x 16 in)

Purchased directly from the artist
Accompanied with a photocertificate



9. 'Untitled'

Oil on canvas

1965

Signed

162 x 130 cm (63 3/4 x 51 1/4 in)

Provenance: Galerie Arnaud, Paris

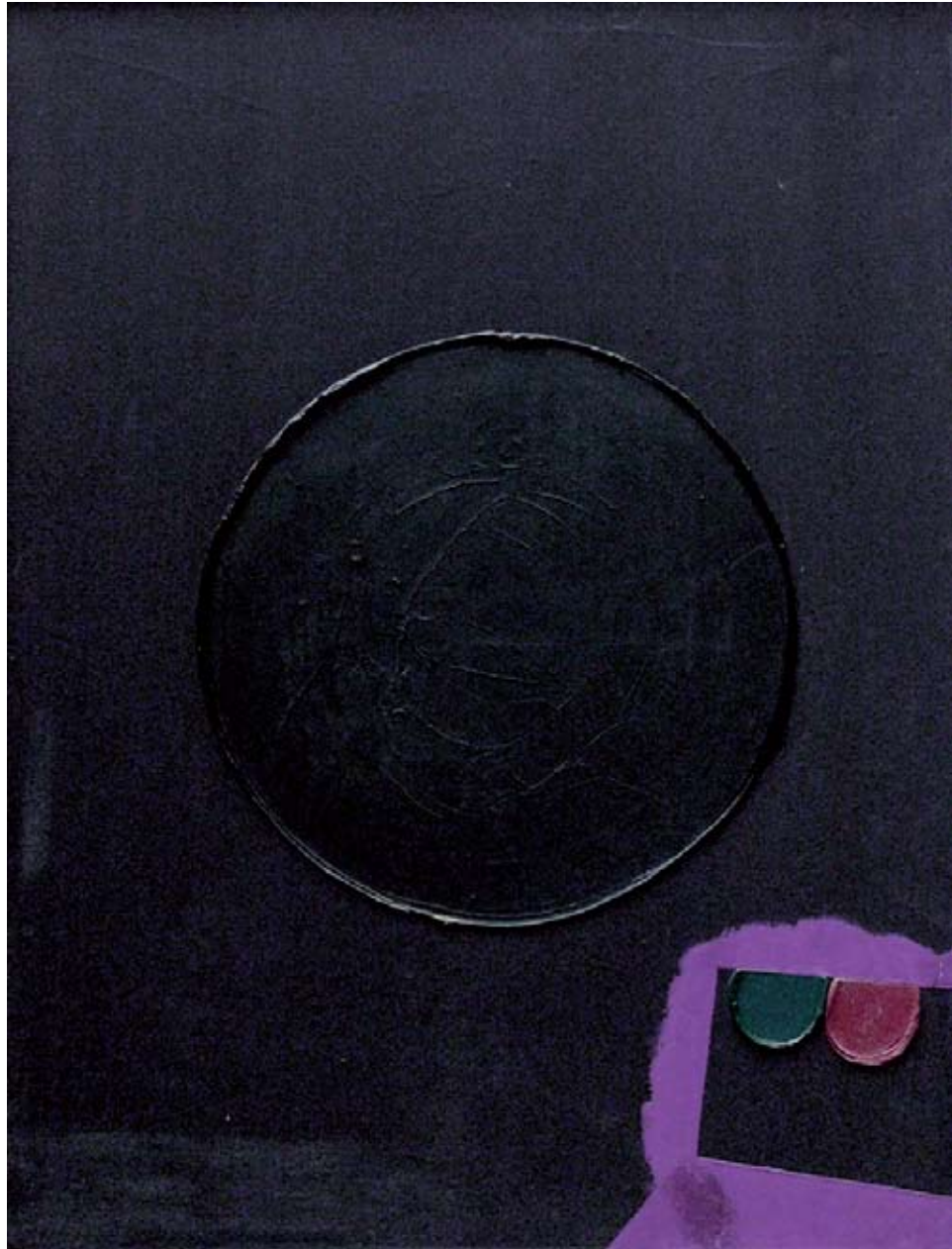


10. 'Untitled'

Oil on canvas
1974
Signed

130 x 97cm (51 1/4 x 38 1/4 in)

Provenance: Galerie Arnaud, Paris



11. 'Untitled'

Acrylic on paper
2007

Signed and dated Feito 07
63.5 x 91 cm (25 x 35 3/4 in)

Purchased directly from the artist
Accompanied with a photocertificate



tàpies

Antoni TÀPIES (b.1923)

Tàpies' early work was influenced by Picasso and Surrealism, as well as the philosophy of Heidegger and Sartre, and Eastern thought. Later, he formed a strong connection with Joan Miró. From his early days as a painter, he was always interested in matter, experimenting with different materials and collage, often using found objects to explore concepts such as the dichotomy between "real culture" and "official culture", or notions of "high" and "low" art. In 1948 he co-founded the magazine *Dau al Set*. As well as using paint and collage on canvas and paper, Tàpies also created monumental sculpture, ceramics, murals, set design, etchings and other graphic work. In 1984, the *Fundació Antoni Tàpies* was set up in Barcelona with the aim of encouraging a better understanding of contemporary art and culture. He has written about the social function of art as a means to transform peoples' behaviour. Sir Roland Penrose has observed how "the ultimate purpose [of Tàpies' art] is transcendental" and that his "deepest hope is of the transformation of mankind".

Selected solo exhibitions and publications

- 1962 First retrospective exhibitions devoted to his work: at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and at the Kunsthaus in Zurich
- 1965 Retrospective exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London
- 1967 First of many solo exhibitions at the Galerie Maeght
- 1974 Publishes *L'art contra l'estètica*, a compilation of articles and statements
- 1978 Publishes the autobiographical *Memòria personal*
- 1982 Publication of *La realitat com a art*
- 2000 Retrospective exhibition at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Prizes

- 1957 Awarded the X Prize Internazionale per la Pittura de Lissone (Milan)
- 1958 XXIX Venice Biennale: receives the UNESCO Prize & David Bright Foundation Award
- 1981 Awarded the Medalla de Oro de Bellas Artes, in Madrid, and doctor honoris causa by the Royal College of Art, London
- 1992 Honorary member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge (USA). Barcelona City Council confers on him the Gold Medal of the city
- 2003 Awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour, France, and the Premio Velázquez de las Artes Plásticas by the Spanish government.



12. 'Collage de papel y cordel'

Collage, oil and rope on paper
1966

Signed in pencil
77 x 57 cm (30 1/4 x 22 3/8 in)

Exhibited: Stockholm, Galerie Buren, 1966, no. 6 ill.

Literature: Alexandre Cirici, *Tapies, Testimoni del Silenci*, Barcelona 1970, p. 272, pl. 278, ill.

Antoni Tapies, *Erinnerungen; Fragment einer Autobiographie*, Vol: II, p. 280, pl. 1, ill.

Anna Agusti, *Antoni Tapies: The Complete Works, Volume II: 1961-1968*, Barcelona 1990, p. 342, no. 1638, ill.



13. 'Forma marrón sobre papel negro I'

Oil and sand on paper on canvas
1995
Signed
56 x 76.5 cm (22 x 30 in)

Certificate: Antoni Tàpies Foundation

Provenance: Private collection, Barcelona.

Bibliography: The complete works Vol. VII - 1991 - 1997, p. 374, No. 6801

Exhibitions:

Auditorio de Galicia, Santiago de Compostela, Centro Cultural de Belém, Belém, Spain, 1996, cat. no. 36, ill. p. 70
Sala de cultura García Castañón. Caja Navarra. Pamplona, Spain, 2002, ill. p. 21





Picasso and Antoni Tàpies, Notre-Dame-de-Vie 1967

14. 'X'

Painting and pencil on paper
2006
Signed in pencil
85 x 64.5 cm (33 1/2 x 25 3/8 in)

Provenance: Galerie Lelong, Paris



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