

TÀPIES: Paintings, 1970–2003
March 20–April 22, 2017

NEW YORK—NAHMAD CONTEMPORARY is pleased to announce *TÀPIES: Paintings, 1970–2003*, on view March 20 through April 22, 2017. Presenting a selection of major paintings by Antoni Tàpies (1923–2012) from the last four decades of his life, this exhibition is a comprehensive meditation on the postwar master, illuminating the many connections between his influential body of work and contemporary art history.

Born in 1923 in Barcelona, Tàpies was a painter, sculptor, and writer whose artistic practice largely anticipated progressive postwar movements such as Arte Povera, neo-Dada, and Fluxus. He was a close friend of artist Joan Miró and co-founded the surrealist group of Catalan artists and writers *Dau al Set* with poet Joan Brossa in 1948. Summoning the material emphasis of French Art Informel and the untamed gestures of American Abstract Expressionism, the dense surfaces of his work are both wide-ranging explorations of unorthodox materiality and metaphysical propositions regarding the “matter” of existence.

The exhibition reveals a pivotal period in the artist’s prolific career when his focus on materiality embraced a discernibly sculptural emphasis. Utilizing various base media—including cardboard, household tapestry, wire, wood, and found objects—Tàpies formed rough, durable grounds on which to develop a language of raw monasticism informed by his Spanish-Catholic origins. Introducing a keen primitivism, these tactile works expound on the artist’s bipartite exploration of the modern condition: the use of religious symbols alludes to the artist’s profound philosophical concerns and the incorporation of low materials intimates his defiant volition to expand the limits of art. While emblematic of Tàpies’ allegiance to surrealist practices in assemblage and the use of found objects, the radical materiality of these paintings is his lasting contribution to contemporary art history.

Though the works eschew the slick formalism of minimalism or hard-edged abstraction, they are rooted in a unified simplicity inherent to the humble materials of their making. Surrealist techniques, such as *grattage*, are combined with scrawled impasto to form multilayered compositions that are in conversation with forebears such as Max Ernst and Pablo Picasso. Likewise, the alchemy of household materials and earthy substances that compose the surfaces summon contemporaries among the ranks of Alberto Burri and Jean Dubuffet. Consonant to those of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, the found objects in these works refigure the two-dimensional pictorial traditions.

Fundamentally influential, these paintings foreshadow the subsequent work of the neo-expressionists, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Julian Schnabel, as well as scores of contemporary artists whose material emphases elevate the offbeat and the provisional. By presenting the works created during this significant period of Tàpies’ career, the exhibition encourages a contemporary encounter with the artist’s work to unveil his influence on both the art of his time and that of today.

Tàpies has been the subject of an impressive range of museum exhibitions and retrospectives, including ones at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1962, 1995); Kunsthaus, Zurich (1962); the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1965); Musée d’Art Moderne, Paris (1973); Nationalgalerie, Berlin (1974); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (1977); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (1990, 2000, 2004); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992); Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (1994); Dia:Beacon, New York (2009); Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao (2013); and the Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2014). He participated in four Venice Biennales, where he represented Spain in 1993 and was awarded the Golden Lion. His profound corpus is delineated in a comprehensive eight-volume catalogue raisonné compiled by Anna Agustí.