

Saura in his Context

Saura with Chillida, Francés,
Millares, Miró, Tàpies and Valdés

This exhibition, organized in conjunction with Enrique Juncosa, presents six very characteristic works by Antonio Saura (1930-1998), one of the most important Spanish artists of the 20th century, in dialogue with six pieces by artists who were his contemporaries: Eduardo Chillida, Juana Francés, Manolo Millares, Joan Miró, Antoni Tàpies and Manolo Valdés. They all resumed the transgressive guiding theme of the vanguards from before the Spanish Civil War, and added a spirit of political commitment to this vision. The works presented cover the period from 1959 to 1990.

Antonio Saura, as a co-founding member of the El Paso group, the aesthetics of which was described as "informalist", shared the gestural and matter painting, with dark and often black tones, which was also developed in countries such as France and Italy, alongside American Abstract Expressionism. The El Paso exhibitions, despite the short-lived existence of the group, had a great impact, and its members received early and significant international recognition. Artists such as Antoni Tàpies and Eduardo Chillida did not belong to the group, although they did share the vision of political commitment, like Joan Miró, who two years before the Spanish Civil War was a leader in the denunciation of the political and social situation.

Saura added a sense of urgency, dynamism, fragility and instability to the tradition of European art, thanks to his rapid, expressive brushstrokes. The piece *Ecorché 1* (1985) belongs to a series on skinned men, a large number of depersonalized faces which, as Juncosa states, "maybe refer, in an allegorical manner, to life under the dictatorship and, in general, to the human condition". Saura worked on large series which extended over his career, including especially *Crucifixiones* (*Crucifixions*), two notable examples of which are presented



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in this show from the 60s; *Multitudes* (*Crowds*), the series to which *Metamorfosis* (*Metamorphosis*) (1985) -another piece in the exhibition- belongs; and numerous portraits, such as those that can also be seen here. Indeed, the portraits of King Philip II form a series by themselves, as do the well-known portraits of Dora Maar and Brigitte Bardot, and the famous versions of Goya's dog.

"Saura in his context" also displays works by all the artists mentioned so far: Manolo Millares, Juana Francés, Eduardo Chillida and Antoni Tàpies, and thus explains the context in which the artist worked. One piece from the 70s by Joan Miró can also be seen, *La pierre philosophale* (*The Philosophical Stone*) (1975), as well as a painting by Manolo Valdés, *El Cardenal Fernando de Guevara* (*Cardinal Fernando de Guevara*) (1986), a version of a painting by El Greco. Valdés is a leading figure from Spanish Pop Art which, like that of other European countries, has a political content that does not tend to be found in related American aesthetics.

Mayoral founded in 1989, is a gallery located in Barcelona and Paris. The gallery articulates an intergenerational exhibition programme focused on the best of postwar and contemporary Spanish art, promoting artists such as Tàpies, Chillida, Millares, Saura, Zóbel, Francés and Chordà, alongside works by key twentieth-century avant-garde artists such as Miró and Picasso, and the best of today's generation with names such as Macarrón, Oliver and Pratts. The gallery develops projects that are rigorously curated and grow out of an exhaustive process of research. The gallery relies upon the support of the artists' families, foundations and other institutions as well as 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.

1. Antonio Saura
Ecorché 1 (*Skinned 1*) (1985)
Oil on canvas
195 x 300 cm

2. Antonio Saura
Metamorfosis (*Metamorphosis*) (1985)
Oil on canvas
205 x 378 cm