

**millares**  
building bridges, not walls

[Press release]

21st of April - 25th of July 2017

**Press preview 20th of April 11am – 14pm**

Presented by Alfonso de la Torre and Elena Sorokina,  
Curators of the exhibition

With the presence of Elvireta Escobio, the widow of the artist

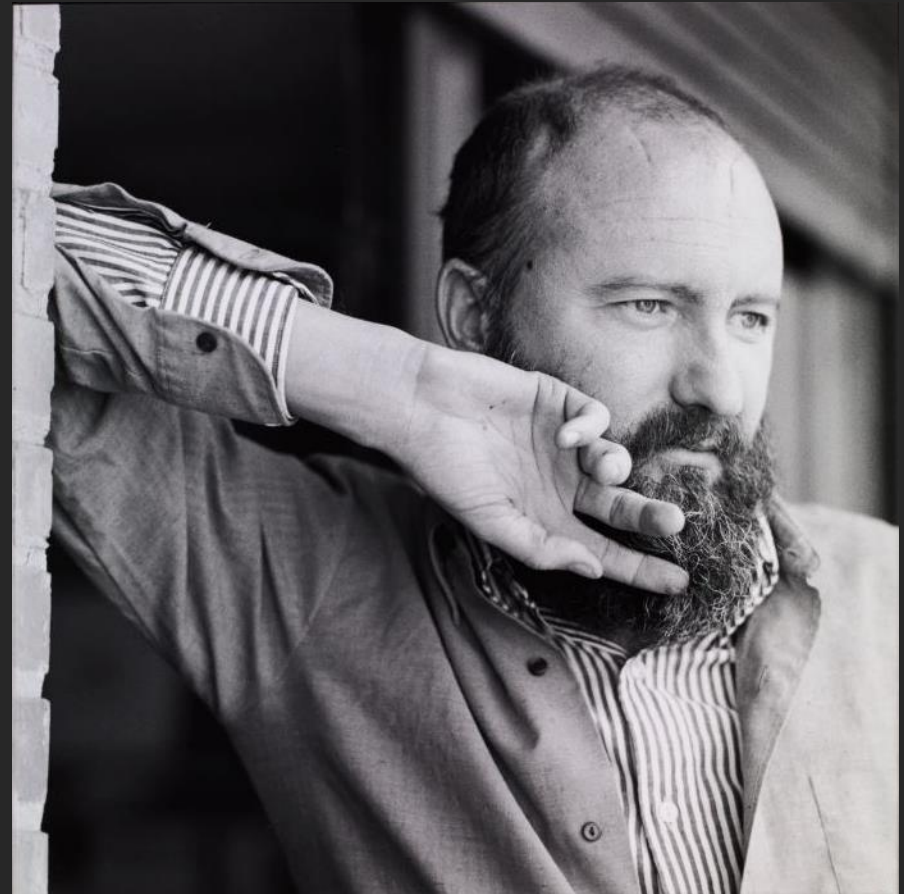
MAYORAL

Consell de Cent 286, Barcelona

## Directors' note

Millares's legacy is universal. When looking at his work we realize that pain and hope are the starting point of his creative process. His art restores our courage, convincing us that it is worthwhile to keep on fighting for a more dignified world. We decided to organize this exhibition in Barcelona in order to honour such a magnificent artist, to illustrate his relationship with Catalonia and to prosecute his battles. Our aim is to explicate Millares's work from the perspective of the present and of the future.

Jordi and Eduard Mayoral



## Manolo Millares (1926-1972)

Manolo Millares was a self-taught artist born on 17 February 1926 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He is best known for his experiments with burlap (a material used in funerary ceremonies in the Guanche tradition in the Canary Islands). The artist's rough handling of the burlap sacking is an expression of the existential anguish wrought by the brutal wars that vitiated Europe during the last century.

Millares was one of the founders of LADAC (The Archers of Contemporary Art). He first exhibited his work in a polemical LADAC exhibition in the Canarian Museum of Las Palmas. His first solo show was held in 1951 at the Galerías Jardí in Barcelona and later that same year he participated in the 1st Biennial of Hispano-American Art in Madrid.

In 1953 the artist married Elvireta Escobio and they settled in Madrid. In 1957 Millares founded the El Paso group (a revolutionary artistic association to promote art under the dictatorial rule of Franco) and participated in the 4th São Paulo Biennial, from which MoMA acquired one of Millares paintings. In 1958 he was invited to participate in the 19th Venice

Biennale, where he exhibited eight paintings in the Spanish Pavilion.

1960 marked a turning point in Millares's professional career. Frank O'Hara, curator at MOMA and a great admirer of his work, invited the artist to show four large-scale paintings at the museum. That same year Millares had solo exhibitions at the Pierre Matisse Gallery (New York) and Galerie Daniel Cordier (Paris), and showed five *arpilleras* (burlap paintings) at the Guggenheim Museum (New York) as part of the exhibition *Before Picasso / After Miró*.

In the years that followed, such institutions as the Tate Gallery in London, The Museum of Modern Art in Buenos Aires, the Galleria Nazionale in Rome and the Reina Sofía in Madrid acquired works by Millares for their permanent collections.

Manolo Millares died in Madrid on 14 August 1972.

The Galeria Mayoral is proud to present *Millares. Building Bridges, Not Walls*, curated by the experts Alfonso de la Torre and Elena Sorokina. Concentrating on Manolo Millares's notorious late period (1957-1972), this is the first major exhibition devoted to this artist in a private gallery and provides a unique opportunity to contemplate an ensemble of seventeen of Millares's *arpilleras* (burlap paintings).

To realize this project we have relied upon the collaboration of Elvireta Escobio, the artist's widow; their daughters, Coro and Eva Millares; Chus Martinez, Emmanuel Guigon and Llucià Homs. In addition, we have had the invaluable support of Documenta Archives Kassel, the Museo Reina Sofía, the Fundación Antonio Pérez, the Successió Miró and the Joan Fundació Brossa.

Millares is one of the most important artists of the postwar period at a national and international level. These paintings perfectly illustrate the artist's creative process, revealing on the one hand his acute sensibility, and on the other his critical spirit and tireless non-conformity. According to curator Alfonso de la Torre, "In Millares' work there is always an element that is out of control; he goes

straight to the essence of things, permitting no distraction, with firm ethical resolve, never giving in."

Millares' life was deeply affected by the violence and brutality of the Spanish Civil War and WWII, which deeply influenced the artist. The crudeness of his work entails a reflection about human brutality; it echoes the physical and emotional wounds of postwar Europe.

In using a rough and vigorous technique, the artist achieves an intense, all-pervading effect that immediately overawes the spectator. The universality of this emotion allows us to build bridges between historical memory and contemporary conflicts, allowing the spirit of Millares's work to persist into the present day. Elena Sorokina, co-curator of the show, argues that "His [Millares's] ferocity at work, the destruction/healing dialectic, are tantamount to a gesture of 'repair', in an emotional as well as historical sense'

### **About the artworks on display**

This exhibition embraces some of Millares' masterpieces, such as **Cuadro 32** (1957-58), one of the eight paintings exhibited in the Spanish Pavilion

at the Venice Biennale (1958) (three of which are on display at the show). It consists of ragged areas, strings and threads, in which the white/black opposition prevails in chromatic terms. Millares himself wrote, "My paintings get increasingly barer. This is not for aesthetic reasons, as you might suppose, but is conveyed by the physical hollowness that is overcoming me."

The forms in his paintings increasingly expanded into three-dimensionality, leading to the so-called 'Homúnculos' series, term borrowed from 16th century alchemical writings meaning 'artificial human'. This series is defined by imprecise anthropomorphic forms, forms in which Millares synthesized his vision of the human body in his own century—a body devastated and dishonoured. For example, the work **Homúnculo (1)** (1964) is paradigmatic of the definition the artist himself gave of this series: "Homunculus, that shade of human redemption, is one of the most unsettling phenomena of recent art. Its existence is the genesis of the artist's introversion as if it was the mirror image of a low blow, a slap in the face, an uncomfortable inharmonious warning to those on the outside."

Among the selection of artworks, the visitor will encounter two extraordinary rare triptychs. One of them, **Divertimentos para un político** (1963), belongs to the permanent collection of the Fundación Antonio Pérez (Cuenca, Spain) and formed part of the exhibition *Le Monde en question* (1967) at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Furthermore, there is on display the painting **Personaje caído** (1967), which has been in a private collection over 45 years.

During the exhibition the gallery will project the documentary **Millares, 1970**, filmed by the artist and his wife, Elvireta Escobio. This short film is a meditation on violence, on scars on the skin and on the Earth's surface. It shows the artist walking through a landscape scarred by war, followed by his artistic praxis in the intimacy of his studio: cutting and stabbing the burlap for his paintings; splashing and pouring paint over them.

In addition, there will be a substantial display of documents and photographs relating to his sources of inspiration, his artistic influences and his relationship with Catalonia.

## About the curators

**Alfonso de la Torre** is a critic and art historian specialised on Spanish contemporary art. He has curated over one hundred exhibitions, published a number of articles and has lectured at renowned universities and institutions around the world. He is an expert on the work by Millares and he has authored catalogues on his paintings and prints.

**Elena Sorokina** is a curator and art historian, currently working as curatorial advisor for documenta 14 in Athens/Kassel. She was recently appointed as curator at HISK, Hoger Instituut Voor Schone Kunsten, in Ghent, Belgium.

## About Mayoral

Mayoral, founded in 1989, is a gallery specialised in modern and post-war art of Barcelona, focusing on the period 1930-1975.

The main artists we represent are Miró, Dalí and Picasso and, at the same time, we also foster the founders of the Catalan avant-garde group “Dau al Set”: Ponç, Brossa, Tharrats, Cuixart and Tàpies, as well as other great artists related to Barcelona, like Calder and Chillida.

We stage exhibitions of the artists we represent, curated and organised in collaboration with the foundations, associations and families of the artists, who work to safeguard their legacies.

The exhibitions we host are the result of a process of research, and include: talks, guided visits with experts, films and educational activities.

The gallery operates on an international scale through its presence in many prestigious art fairs, and is in contact with the most important art collectors, galleries and museums, such as the MoMA, the Picasso Museum, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Museo Reina Sofía.



*Cuadro 32*, 1957-58  
Mixed media on burlap  
127 x 152,5 cm

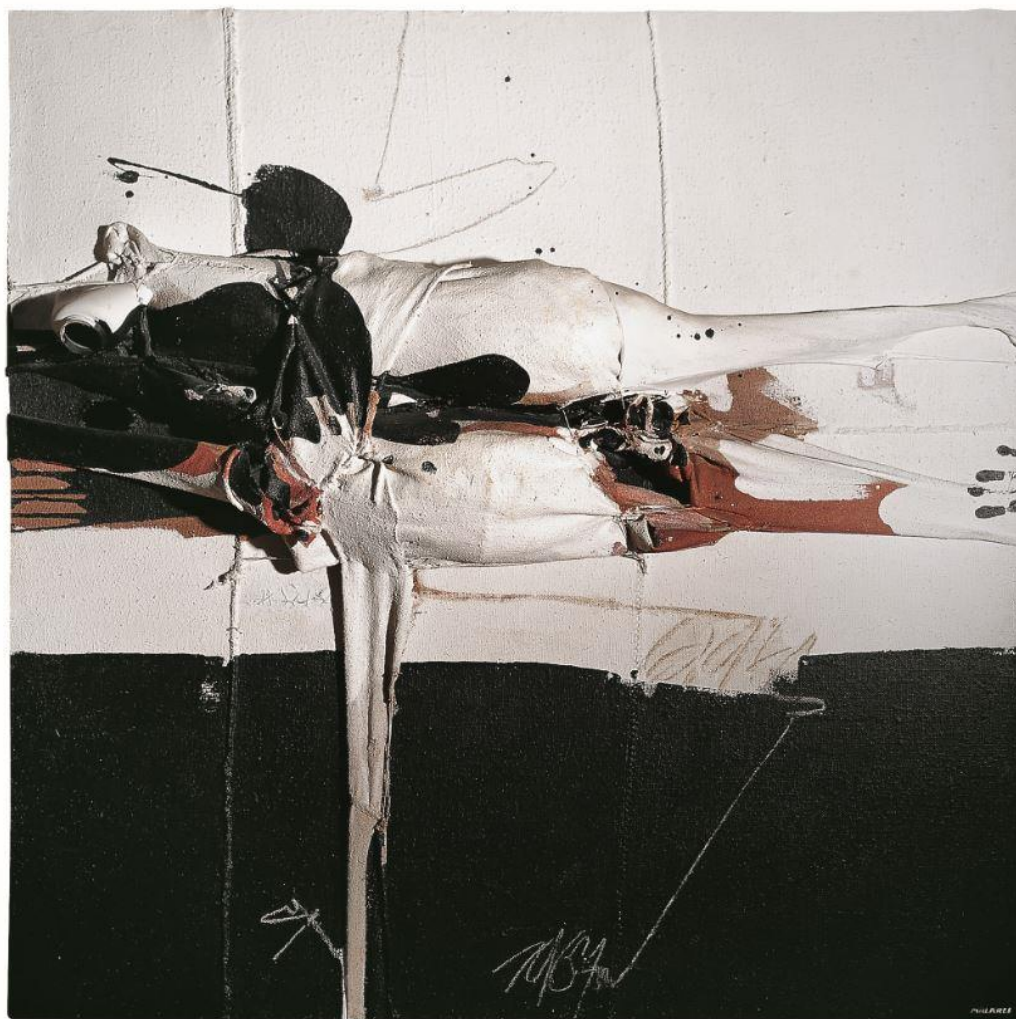




*Divertimentos para un político* (Tríptico), 1963  
Mixed media on burlap  
100 x 246 cm



*Homúnculo (1)*, 1964  
Mixed media on burlap  
130 x 97 cm



*Personaje Caído*, 1967  
Mixed media on burlap  
150 x 150 cm

If you wish to receive further information do not hesitate to contact:

Laura Schaefer

Press and Communications manager

+34 93 488 02 83 / +34 669 73 54 22

[laura@galeriamayoral.com](mailto:laura@galeriamayoral.com)

[www.galeriamayoral.com](http://www.galeriamayoral.com)

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