

Waddington Galleries

PRESS RELEASE

ANTONI TÀPIES

FOURTEEN PAINTINGS

26 March - 26 April 2003

Waddington Galleries are pleased to present an exhibition of recent paintings by Antoni Tàpies, widely considered to be one of Europe's most important post-war artists.

The fourteen works in this exhibition reveal Tàpies's continued involvement in the nature of his materials. He mixes powdered pigments, sand, marble dust and varnish to create rich, heavily layered surfaces which he freely marks with a variety of uneven creases, deep incisions, and gestural scores, as well as the imprints or inclusion of everyday objects. The combination and transformation of the different substances turns his paintings into a kind of alchemy.

The artist draws on both Western and Eastern philosophies and religion. His manipulation of raw materials and use of humble objects reflect his assertion that 'My personal god is not to be found in heaven but on earth, as in the wisdom of the Orient'. The gouged surface of *Ala vermella (Red Wing)*, for example, reveals the image of a severed limb and foot, a blood-red dagger and an angel-like kneeling figure. This work looks back to a Hindu legend in which a holy man cuts off his leg to feed an animal. Several works in the exhibition include cryptic numbers, letters and symbols, in addition to the many examples of A's, T's and crosses that abound in his art. Tàpies has stated: 'My works are often paintings, objects and poetry in one: in a way they are visual poetry.'

The necessity of change is a persistent theme of Tàpies's art. The processes of healing and renewal pervade many of the works in the exhibition. In *Collage del raspall (Brush collage)* the juxtaposition of a brush with an open mouth evokes ideas of cleansing and purification and refers to a Buddhist saying that after speaking the name of anything holy it is better to wash the mouth. The ancient emblem of a coiled snake, molded from dark sand, of *Espiral 3 (Spiral 3)* wraps in upon itself as if caught in an infinite process of rebirth.

Antoni Tàpies was born in Barcelona, 1923. He gained early recognition with his participation in the Venice Biennale and at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh in 1952. A year later he had his first solo exhibition in New York at the Martha Jackson Gallery. Since then, Tàpies has exhibited worldwide. His first retrospectives were in 1962 at the Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. His first major exhibition in Great Britain was at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1965). Tàpies's most recent retrospective was at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2000). The artist has received many awards including the Peace Prize from the United Nations Association in Spain (1984), the Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters from the French Government (1988), and the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale (1993) and was made honorary member of the Royal Academy of Arts, London (1998). In 1991 the Fundació Antoini Tàpies opened in Barcelona to exhibit and promote the study of Modern and Eastern art and as a place to see important examples of Tàpies's work.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an introduction by Richard Morphet accompanies this exhibition

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