

## **Antoni Llena:** The Practice of Dispossession

Opening Reception: Friday February 8, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through March 23, 2019

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *The Practice of Dispossession*, the first exhibition of the work of the Catalan artist Antoni Llena in the gallery. This exhibition brings together a selection of works that spans the artist's over fifty-year long career, and includes manipulated paper reliefs, sculptures and drawings, as well as photographs of the young artist and his sculptural works taken by his life partner Antoni Bernad. As the art historian and curator Luis Pérez Oramas writes in the exhibition text, Llena's practice has been deeply informed by his early adulthood years spent as a novice at a Capuchin convent in Sarrià, Catalonia. Similar to other Franciscan orders, the Capuchins practice austerity and discipline: they are forbidden to own property, must wear a simple brown wool tunic, spend two hours daily in private prayer and work in service of the poor. This lifestyle based on, and guided by simplicity and non-covetousness, inspired Llena to create art along these same lines, to practice a dispossession, a stripping down, of materials to their barest, most essential form – which, at times included his own body – and sourcing that which had previously been discarded. Pérez Oramas writes, “There is in his work, then, a theology of vanishing, atheist or negative: a Franciscan aesthetic of dispossession, of seeking to be nothing, with its consequent glorification of what we insistently disdain: the remains and ruins of the day [... and] ultimately, the sumptuous glory of the fragility that can be in all things: being nothing in order to become everything, as a verse by Murilo Mendes states.”

The sculptures seen in Bernad's 1968 photographs, such as *Escultures per portar a la mà* and *Escultura dissecada*, as well as the ones seen in vitrines in the gallery, *El progrés és un fantasma d'ales foradades* (1968), *Sofisma anomenat núvia* and *Sofisma* (both 1989), embody this fragility through the delicateness of their materials and in the tenuousness nature of their construction. Their modest presence, as Pérez Oramas describes, is that of “monuments clothed in anti-monumental vestments”, the loftiness of monumentality brought down to earth through the use of incised notebook paper and black tape, a scrap of bubble wrap and rusted staples, remnants of wood and construction paper. But the sculptures persist in their fragility, having been set in a “precarious equilibrium” of grace and poverty, in the cycle of becoming nothing and everything, being born and reborn, what is left remaining is the artist and the work of art.

Llena also applies this concept to the notion of the passage of time, of experiencing the repetition of days turning to nights turning back into days, in the effort to produce one drawing a day. In the series *SOS*, the works *Senyals de fum des d'un subsòl* become a visual calendar or diary, the pages of which serving as witnesses to the movements and marks of the artist through the course of a 24-hour period individually, and a month long period collectively. As Pérez Oramas writes, “I have accustomed myself to the idea that Toni Llena only works with *what has been left over*. [...] And I can imagine him every morning, on that monastic table that also serves as a remnant, scratching *Gracianically* his precarious papers: they accumulate there like the days, and like the days they pile up, densities that unbeknownst to us provide us a measure of what has passed: not time but what occurs, where things remain as well, in the immeasurable.”

These visual registers also stand as marks of the artist's persistence, to take the remains of minutes, hours and days, to comb through them, and through this recollection, rendering the creation of something new.

**Antoni Llena** (Barcelona, 1942) is a painter, writer and sculptor known for his *arte povera* style work. Llena was a novice in Sarrià until 1966, following the Capuchin Franciscan Order. Soon after, he became close with painters Antoni Tàpies and Albert Ràfols-Casamada. He also befriended other artists like Jordi Galí, Àngel Jové, Silvia Gubern and Alberto Porta with whom he collaborated on the first piece of video art made in Spain called *Primera muerte* (1969). His first solo show was at the Petite Galerie de Lleida, Catalonia in 1969, an exhibition where he drew on gallery walls and featured paper and shadow sculptures. 1969 was a turbulent year for Llena that was marked by the loss of many of his works, resulting in him vowing to take a 10-year break from art in the name of poetic radicalism. Following his return to art making, his work has also been shown at Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (1989, 2010); Artgrafic, Barcelona (1991); Centre Cultural La Mercè, Girona (2003); Galeria Toni Tàpies (1997, 1999, 2001, 2006) and Galería A34, Barcelona (2012, 2015, 2018). Llena's works are held in the collections of Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His sculptures have also been installed in multiple public spaces across Barcelona. He was a professor at Universitat de Gerona in Catalonia where he taught artistic literature. He has also hosted workshops for the School of Visual Arts in New York and the EINA School of Art and Design in Barcelona. The artist lives and works in Barcelona.

For press inquires please contact Eugenia Sucre, Director, at [eugenia@henriquefaria.com](mailto:eugenia@henriquefaria.com)

## **Mathias Goeritz: Metachromatic**

Opening Reception: Friday February 8, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through March 23, 2019

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Metachromatic*, the first exhibition of the work of Mathias Goeritz (1915-1990) in the gallery. This exhibition brings together a selection of metal relief panels, sculptures, photographs of architectural works, prints and paintings that demonstrate the artist's career-long occupation with the physicality achieved through the application of light and color onto geometric and organic forms. While Goeritz came of age under and studied the influence of the deliberate rationalism of Modernist thinking in Europe, it was the unmeasurable and immeasurable of that which exists beyond calculated space and experience to which Goeritz dedicated much of his art making. After having lived in Mexico for five years, Goeritz formulated the principle of Emotional Architecture that would guide his work for the rest of his career. By casting aside the primacy of functionalism, logic and utility, Goeritz, through his works of visual art and architectural designs, worked to create environments that would elicit maximum emotion and spiritual connection, collaboration and freedom of creativity, that would be a space of transcendence within the strictures of modernity.

As Daniel Garza-Usabiaga notes in the exhibition text, the titles Goeritz gave to his major works and series, *Mensajes (Messages)* and *Mensajes metacromáticos (Metachromatic Messages)* were because, "they carried a 'meaning' beyond the presence of color. For the artist, these messages were representations of nothingness and the absolute; through the luminosity of the gold leaf [he frequently utilized in his works] he sought to actualize a traditional relation between spirituality and light." The radiance that emanates from the gold leaf-lined works not only makes light palpable to the viewer, but it also softens their physical boundaries, blurring the distinction between light and material, while elevating the forms from the mundane to the transcendent. This is experienced in his *Formas geométricas (Geometric Forms, 1961 and 1969)* in which he transformed the foundational, three-dimensional shapes of the cube, pyramid and cylinder. The metal relief panels, *Mensajes (c. 1958-1962)*, feature perforated sheets of metal adhered to painted wooden supports. The patterns, created by hammering nails through the metal sheets, highlight visual juxtapositions of the simultaneously smooth and jagged surfaces, as well as the reflective and matte materials, when the works are illuminated.

Goeritz's spiritual and humanist beliefs infused his architectural projects, which ranged from public art monuments and sculptural installations for private communities, murals

and stained glass for houses of worship, and an industrial complex. The maquette for *El laberinto de Jerusalem (Jerusalem Labyrinth, 1973-1980)* was made as part of a proposal for a children's playground in Jerusalem and is considered a prime example of Emotional Architecture. The main feature of the park included a five-pillared structure made of local white stone that referenced both his previous public work *Torres de Satélite (Satélite Towers, 1957)* along Mexico City's Ruta de la Amistad—a cultural initiative made in preparation for the 1968 Olympic Games in which public works by international artists would line the stretch of highway connecting different Olympic venues—and the skylines he experienced while living in Morocco during World War II. The park would also include sculptures from other artists, including Alexander Calder and Sheila Hicks, maintaining the collaborative spirit essential to Goeritz's public projects. The exhibition will also present photographs taken by Kati Horna of Goeritz's architectural projects in Mexico, including the Automex car factory in Toluca (1964), which featured conical-shaped towers that served as multi-purpose spaces and echoed the shape of the grain silos seen in the northwestern state of Zacatecas and the double-peaked volcano Nevado de Toluca seen in the distance from the factory's open courtyard.

As Garza-Usabiaga concludes his essay, while Goeritz was involved with many projects in both the commercial and public sectors, his aim to appeal to the totality of human emotions with his designs and create conditions for open connection, creativity, illumination and spirituality was ever present.

**Mathias Goeritz** (Danzig, 1915; Mexico City, 1990) was a German-born Mexican painter and sculptor. Goeritz studied art history and philosophy at Friedrich Wilhelm Universität (now the Humboldt University of Berlin) and earned his doctorate in art history in 1940. While at Friedrich Wilhelm Universität, Goeritz was also training to be an artist at Kunstgewerbe und Handwerkerschule, an applied arts and trade school, where he studied with well-known German artists Hans Orłowski and Max Kaus. Shortly after completing his studies, Goeritz fled World War II and Germany to Morocco in 1941. A year later, he married photographer Marianne Gast and the couple moved to Mexico in 1949. His early works were exhibited under the pseudonym "Ma-Gó" and were first shown in a solo show at Librería-Galería Clan in Madrid. Goeritz was later offered a teaching job at Escuela de Arquitectura in Guadalajara. He accepted and had great success showing his work in Mexico. He is noted to have had a profound influence on younger Mexican artists like Pedro Friedeberg and Helen Escobedo. His work has been shown in galleries and museums all over the world, such as: Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City (2017); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2016); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2015); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007); among others. His pieces are also in the collections of institutions, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; the Jewish Museum, New York; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh and the Tate Collection, London. The artist passed away on August 4th, 1990 in Mexico City.

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