

Josep Grau-Garriga

Fiber sculpture of the 70s - 90s



"Tapestry is an adventure, his adventure, that he intends to lead as a personal game, out of the routines of traditional art, Lurçat's workshops (his first master) or the Lausanne Biennials. This marginal game is self-sufficient, without beginning or end.

'The tapestries of this inventive and warmhearted Catalan thrive on their own materials', rightly said Pierre Cabanne. And indeed, Grau-Garriga is the perfect master-craftsman of his own illusions, imagination, fantasies and vision. The existential content is so decisive that it dominates every moment of work, every object, every action."

Pierre Restany

Paris, April 30, 1984.

Michel Soskine Inc. presents at his gallery in **Madrid** a selection of **tapestries by Josep Grau-Garriga**.

Grau-Garriga, primary promoter of the Catalan School of Tapestry is considered the leading exponent of the contemporary tapestry renewal in Spain. Globally, he has been recognized as one of the four most important artists of textile art, together with Jagoda Buić, Sheila Hicks and Magdalena Abakanowicz.

Inspired in his youth by French artist Jean Lurçat, with whom he collaborated, Grau-Garriga abandoned the two-dimensional plane of the classic tapestry fabric, and embraced an entirely new creative phenomenon, which in the 60s revolutionized textile as art.

Beyond the traditional use of the warp and weft, Grau-Garriga explored the possibilities of texture and volume, achieving an extraordinary sculptural effect on his tapestries, experimenting with three-dimensional space and monumentality.

His works, with such a daring use of materials, colour and composition, capture the intensity of his artistic search.

The increasing interest in textile art, which at an institutional level has resulted in major exhibitions as "Decorum" at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, "Soft Pictures" at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turino or "The New Art of the Loom" Touring in Canada and the US, reflect the unique semantic richness - for its many historical, political, social and symbolic meanings - this medium offers.

Artists such as Rudolf Stingel, Dewar and Gicquel, Ghada Amer, William Kentridge, Gerhard Richter or David Hammons continue nowadays to tear down the usual boundaries between decorative arts, design and the most radical artistic proposals.

JOSEP GRAU-GARRIGA

1929, Sant Cugat del Vallès (Catalonia, Spain) - 2011, Saint-Mathurin-sur-Loire (Angers, France).

Josep Grau-Garriga was born in Sant Cugat del Vallès, on February 18, 1929, within a family of farmers who suffered the hardships of Civil War and particularly those of the post-war, going through jail and exile. It's in this environment where Grau-Garriga discovers his vocation for art.

In the early 40s, Grau-Garriga gets his first influences through the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, its frescoes, Romanesque and Gothic paintings.

He studies art first at the Llotja and then at the Escola Superior de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi in Barcelona.

In the 50s, he is devoted to mural painting, creating works of the magnitude of the murals in the chapel of Sant Crist of Llaceres (Sant Cugat del Vallès, 1956) or the sanctuary of St. Mary of Paretdelgada (La Selva del Camp, 1959).

In 1956, the entrepreneur Miquel Samaranch offers him the opportunity to revitalize the old *Casa Aymat* in Sant Cugat dedicated to the production of carpets and tapestries. Samaranch hands him the artistic direction of the company within which an experimental tapestry workshop is organized.

A year later (1957) the company funds his first study trip to France, where he deeply gets to know the technique of medieval and contemporary tapestry, a medium he'll revolutionize and that will grant him international relevance.

He personally meets the painter and French poet Jean Lurçat, considered a master of modern tapestry and one of the leaders of its renovation, who, the following year (1958), would come to work with him in Saint Cere, in Olt (France).

Applying the technical and conceptual knowledge acquired in France to the local context, Grau-Garriga, as artistic the director, and his disciples place the *Casa Aymat* on the basis of what has been called the Catalan School of Tapestry. He became the theorist of the movement generated

there, involving, for nearly two decades, some of the most well-known artists of the time such as Joan Miró, Josep Maria Subirachs and Antoni Tàpies. The new emerging concepts revolutionized textile art both nationally and internationally.

In 1964, he presents the first solo exhibition of tapestry ever in Spain, at Sala Gaspar in Barcelona. The following year, his first exhibition abroad, at the II Biennale Internationale de la Tapisserie Moderne in Lausanne (Switzerland), grants him a special public recognition.

In 1969, the Institute of International Education in New York conceded him a scholarship that will allow him to move to New York for a year and travel around the United States, Mexico and Canada.

During the 70s he combines his work with a remarkable teaching practice.

In 1988 a major retrospective exhibition is presented at the Palau Robert in Barcelona..

In 2004 his hometown pays him tribute. The "Grau-Garriga Year", includes, inter alia, a double exhibition of recent work and one dedicated to his early years.

Since 2007, one of his tapestries presides the entrance of the new building of the Town Hall of Sant Cugat. It's made up of four red and yellow pieces with different materials, including copper wire of different thicknesses that gives the work a transparent appearance.

He died on August 29, 2011 in Angers (France), where he lived since 1989.

The Contemporary Tapestry Museum - Casa Aymat, holds an important collection of his works, as well as the MACBA - Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona.

In addition, his work is part of the permanent collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the Museum of Contemporary Art International Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, among others.

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