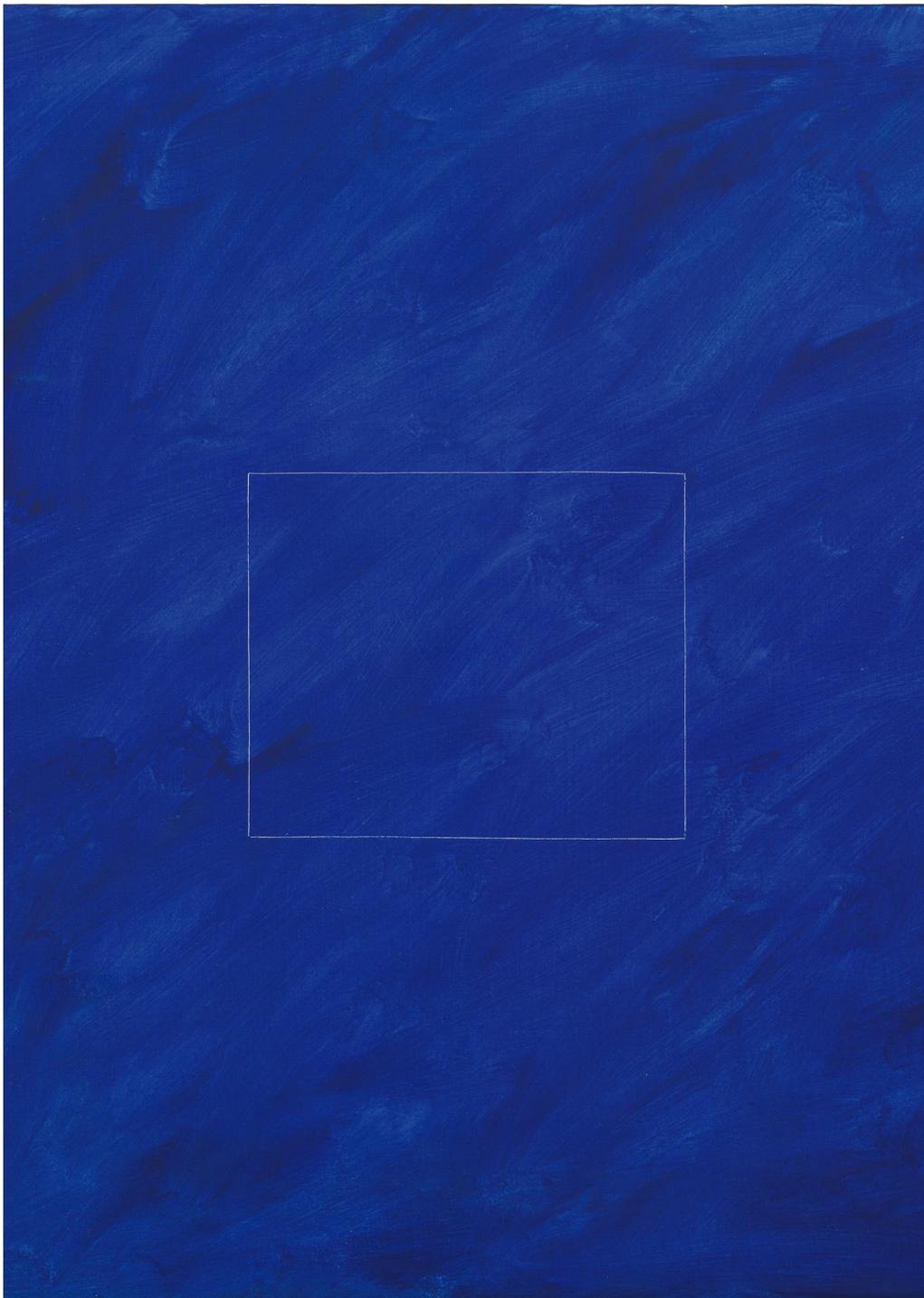


Fundació Joan Miró ✱  Barcelona

PRESS KIT

Temporary exhibition
Alfons Borrell. Works and days

3/7/2015 – 27/09/2015



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Introduction

Alfons Borrell. Works and Days

3 July – 27 September 2015

Curator: Oriol Vilapuig

The Fundació Joan Miró presents *Alfons Borrell. Works and Days*, a survey of the oeuvre of one of the greatest exponents of Catalan abstract painting.

Curated by Oriol Vilapuig, the exhibition brings together almost 200 works, many of which have never been exhibited before, offering an overview of the key aspects of the work of Alfons Borrell. The selection includes paintings, drawings and prints, and also recovers the 1964 film *Aigua fosca* (Dark Water).

The exhibition eschews a chronological approach and instead unfolds through several areas of study that revolve around Alfons Borrell's painting practice over the past six decades, and his attitude in regard to art as life experience.

This show, which kicks off the Fundació Joan Miró's 40th anniversary commemorative programme, reunites it with an artist whose career ran parallel to its own history. Borrell took part in the Fundació's first group exhibition in its inaugural year, and participated in the special edition of prints commemorating its 25th anniversary in 2000. Borrell also held a solo show at Espai 10 (now Espai 13) in 1978.

***Alfons Borrell. Works and Days* opens at 7.30 pm on 2 July 2015, and will remain on show until 27 September at the Fundació Joan Miró.**

Press release

Alfons Borrell. Works and Days

3 July – 27 September 2015

Curator: Oriol Vilapuig

Barcelona, 2 July 2015. - *"I often get asked: 'do you work much?' It's almost a standard question for painters... 'No', I answer. [...] Because I keep my distance from this idea of an artist. I don't feel like an artist, I feel like I'm living my life: I feed the fish, I feed the birds, I do the gardening when I have to, I go to the mountain, I go to the studio. [...] Painting is part of my life; [...] In fact, I would like to actually be paint. [...] There are two types of painters: those who paint the sea from an apparent distance through a window, and those who go down the ramp, walk through the sand, get into the sea, and emerge tinted blue. [...] then when I finish, when this figure in front of me tells me not to touch it anymore, because it has told me everything it has to say, I don't give it a title: I give it a date."*

Alfons Borrell (Barcelona, 1931) says that he began painting "from the ground up" in the fifties, and when he talks about his sixty years of painting practice he does so in the same unassuming style. The exhibition *Alfons Borrell. Works and Days* remains true to this spirit: it is an account of a creative project that beats to the rhythm of life and defines itself as an exercise in perseverance and intensity over time. This steadfast commitment, which steers clear of idealisation, is the key element that inspired the title of the exhibition, which refers to the work of the same name by the Greek poet Hesiod.

The visual artist Oriol Vilapuig (Sabadell, 1964) is the curator of this show, which encourages new readings and confrontations with the work of one of the greatest exponents of abstract art in Catalonia. Although the exhibition is a retrospective, Vilapuig eschews a chronological approach and adopts the form of an open essay in order to allow multiple interpretations. In the words of Vilapuig, «the exhibition presents a reinterpretation work methodology in which an author of a previous generation is revisited by an author of a younger generation. It is not a study from a historiographical perspective but from the sight of another author that activates a way to see the work».

Vilapuig presents a selection of almost 200 paintings, drawings, and prints, 130 of which have never been exhibited before, as well as the film *Aigua fosca*, which Borrell made in 1964 based on his idea of nature as an engine that drives artistic change. The exhibition ends with some handwritten notes recently recovered by Borrell, which have never been publicly exhibited before. These notes are a record of the conversations between Borrell and the painter Hermen Anglada Camarasa when he visited his studio in Port de Pollença in 1950.

With this exhibition that kicks off its 40th anniversary commemorative programme, the Fundació Joan Miró also celebrates having grown alongside figures such as Alfons Borrell, whose career progressed in parallel to its own history. Borrell took part in the group exhibition *Pintura 1* in 1976 – the Fundació’s inaugural year – and held his first solo show two years later at Espai 10 (now Espai 13). He also participated in the special edition of prints commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Fundació in 2000. Now, for its 40th anniversary, the Fundació hosts an important retrospective that includes three works that were exhibited at Espai 10 in the 1970s.

Alfons Borrell. Works and Days unfolds through seven areas of study. It begins with an antechamber entitled *Prelude*, which introduces visitors to Borrell’s work as a phenomenological event and sets the tone for approaching the rest of the show. The second section, *The Oblique Revolt: The 1960s and the Gallot Actions*, focuses on Borrell’s participation in the painting and action group Gallot.

The shift towards nature, in the sense of a dynamic and ever-changing force, is the theme of the third section of the exhibition, *Opening and Overflow: Dark Water*. The following section, *Contained Action: Pieces that Suggest Themselves*, is based on the dialectics between the overflow that arises from Borrell’s conception of nature and the creation of a radical, personal language.

The show then moves on to a fifth section that focuses on Borrell’s ongoing experimentation with boundaries through the square form, and a sixth that looks at his conception of colour. The last section is dedicated to the idea of repetition and variation in Borrell’s work and how it is manifested in an intense serial work that goes beyond a pure methodology.

The publication that accompanies the exhibition is also based on these seven areas of study, and includes texts by Oriol Vilapuig, Jèssica Jaques, Carles Guerra, Alvaro Siza, and Alfons Borrell himself.

About the Artist

Alfons Borrell (Barcelona, 1931) is responsible for one of the most significant oeuvres in Catalan abstract art. Since the age of nine he has lived in the city of Sabadell, where he worked in the family watchmaking shop and where he still lives and paints every day.

Borrell has taught and actively participated in the dissemination of art in his city: in 1955, with Joaquim Montserrat, he co-founded the Sala d'Art Actual and the Sabadell Academy of Fine Arts, and he was also one of the promoters of Sala Tres at the Sabadell Academy of Fine Arts in 1971.



Alfons Borrell in his studio's patio
© Fundació Joan Miró. Photo: Pere Pradesaba

At the age of nineteen, Borrell's interest in painting led him to visit Hermen Anglada Camarasa's studio while he was completing military service at Port de Pollença, Majorca. On his return to Sabadell he enrolled in two life drawing courses and met his future wife, Rosa, with whom he went on to have three children.

Having evolved from figurative painting to abstraction, Borrell spent the sixties on a process of research and investigation that led him to simplify his approach to form and colour. In the early seventies he worked on order and symmetry, and began to use new materials and methods, switching from oil paints to acrylics. The death of his wife in 1988 was another important turning point after which Borrell's painting became more radical in formal terms.

In 1959 he exhibited with Juan Bermúdez at the Ateneu Barcelonès, where he presented works absolutely installed in the language of abstraction. Juan Eduardo Cirlot made a review on the *Correo de las Artes*.

In 1960 Borrell joined Gallot, a group inspired by “action painting” that carried out a series of street actions in Sabadell and Barcelona. A few months later, the art critic Alexandre Cirici Pellicer invited him to take part in the inaugural exhibition of the original Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, located in the dome of the Cinema Coliseum. After an introspective period Borrell presents an exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sabadell in 1969, which also show his works in 1970, 1974 and 1977.

Since the late seventies his work has been shown at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Galeria Joan Prats in Barcelona, MACBA, Centre Cultural Tecla Sala (L’Hospitalet de Llobregat), Museu d’Art de Sabadell, and Fundació Palau de Caldes d’Estrac, and at major art world events in France, Germany, the United States and Japan. As part of the refurbishment and restoration of its Barcelona headquarters, the Ateneu Barcelonès commissioned Borrell to create a large-scale permanent work for the lobby of the auditorium.

The work of Alfons Borrell has been shown at the Fundació Joan Miró on three occasions: he was featured as a representative of the new generation of Catalan painters influenced by the work of Joan Miró, Antoni Tàpies and Albert Ràfols-Casamada in the exhibition *Pintura 1* in 1976; he held a solo show of his paintings at the Fundació’s Espai 10 in 1978, and he was one of the artists who participated in the exhibition organised to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fundació in 2000.

Over the years, his work has been championed by cultural figures such as the poet and art critic Juan Eduardo Cirlot, the artistic director of Galeria Joan Prats in the seventies Lluís Maria Riera, the poet Joan Brossa – with whom he produced the book *Trasllat* in 1983 –, the artist Perejaume, and art critics including Maria Lluïsa Borràs, Pilar Parcerisas, Vicenç Altaió and Manuel Guerrero, to name a few. In 2014, Borrell received the honorary GAC Award at the 7th Gallery Night organised by the three associations of Catalan Art Galleries in recognition of his career and of his key role in the dissemination of art.

About the Curator

Oriol Vilapuig (Sabadell, 1964) is the curator of *Alfons Borrell. Works and Days*. Visual artist, Oriol Vilapuig studied at EINA school of art in Barcelona from 1982 to 1985, and earned a BA in Fine Arts from the Sant Jordi Faculty of Fine Arts, Universitat de Barcelona, in 1990. He has worked as a teacher at the Illa Art School of Sabadell in several educational projects.

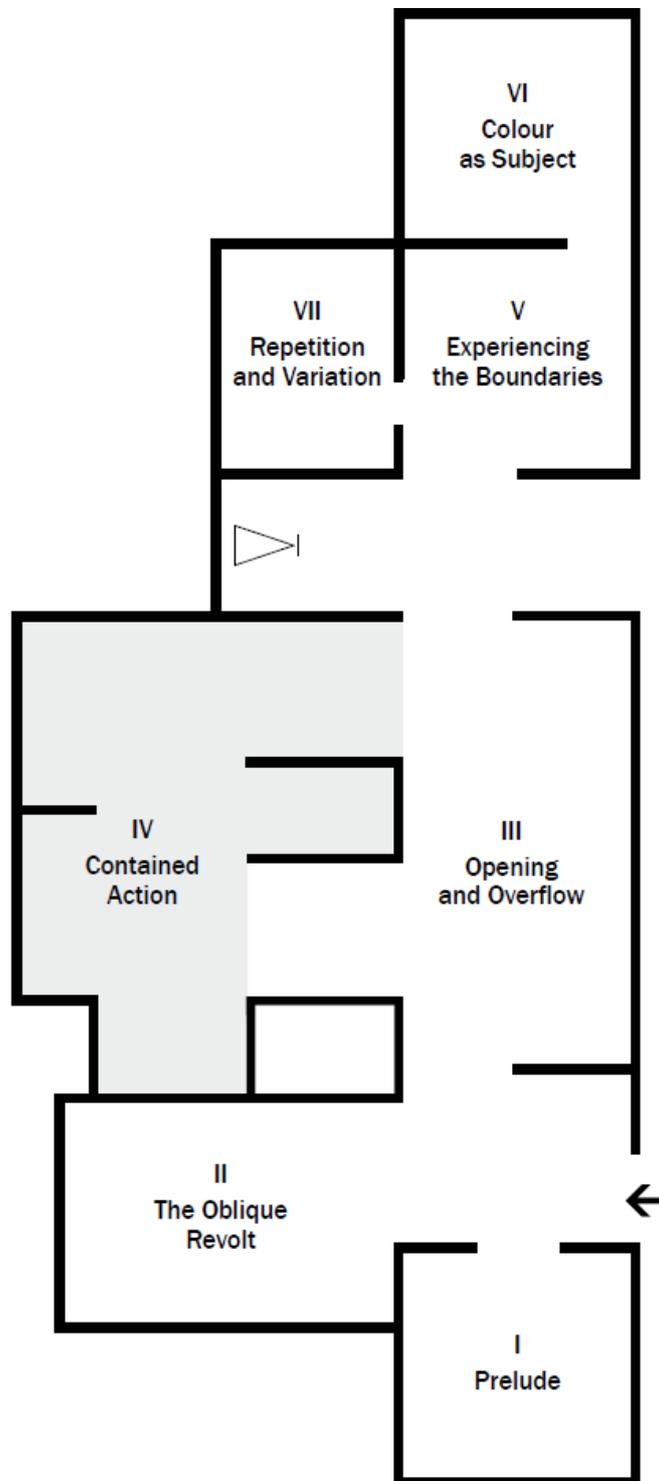
In his work, Oriol Vilapuig uses the essay form as a procedure and methodology, in the dual sense of open research or study, and a way of defining or questioning the limits of experience. This experience is to a large extent made visible through tradition, quite literally, as something that precedes us. Hence his regular use of citation in his work, which mainly consists of drawing and writing as a way of exploring subjects such as the body, desire, eroticism (in the sacred sense), loss, fear, and time.

Vilapuig exhibited his works for the first time at the Sabadell Academy of Fine Arts in 1986. His work has recently been included in the group exhibitions *Tan funesto deseo*, Galería casa sin fin Madrid. (2014), *La por més antiga*, Galería Joan Prats, Barcelona (2012), *Contemporary Cartographies*, CaixaForum, Barcelona, Madrid (2012), *Critical Episodes (1957-2011)*. MACBA Collection, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) (2012), and *Against Tàpies*, Fundació Tàpies, Barcelona (2013).

His work can be found in numerous public and private collections, including; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA); Museo Bellas Artes (Álava); Ajuntament de Sabadell Collection; Museu d'Art de Sabadell; Fundación Santa María (Albarracín); Col·lecció Testimoni "la Caixa" (Barcelona); Banc Sabadell Collection; Universitat de Valencia, and Fundación Cañada Blanch (Valencia); Babilonia Wilner Foundation (San Francisco, USA).

In 2011 Oriol Vilapuig prepared a comprehensive review of Alfons Borrell's works on paper, which was presented at the Fundació Palau de Caldes d'Estrac and at the Museu d'Art de Sabadell (MAS).

The Exhibition



1. Prelude

“There are two types of painters: those who paint the sea from an apparent distance through a window, and those who go down the ramps, walk through the sand, get into the sea, and emerge tinted blue.”

Vilapuig argues that Alfons Borrell’s painting calls for forms of experimentation rather codes of interpretation; that it requires a phenomenological rather than a psychological approach. His paintings and drawings are not offered up as isolated objects, but as an expression that opens up to a specific place. The antechamber entitled *Prelude* is intended to help visitors also open up to the place and to Borrell’s work, and sets the tone for experiencing the rest of the show.

Alfons Borrell

15-XI-89

1989

Acrylic and collage on canvas

230 x 300 cm



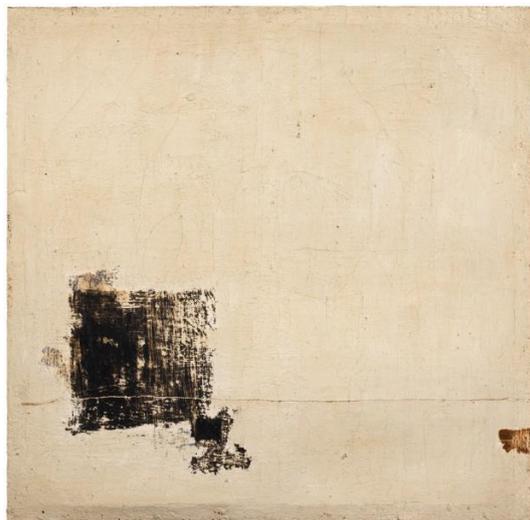
Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1959

Oil on canvas

124.5 x 124 cm



Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1959

Oil on canvas

124 x 124 cm



2. The Oblique Revolt: The 1960s and the Gallot Actions

“The group Gallot affected me deeply, it hurt and confused me because they were a very revolutionary group of painters, while I had a different understanding of what painting was. I didn’t want my painting to be destructive, I wanted it to be constructive. But it took me some time to discover this.”

In the early sixties, against the backdrop of Franco’s dictatorship, certain new ideas concerning arts practice converged in the city of Sabadell and triggered a short-lived gesture of revolt that took the form of the group Gallot, which Alfons Borrell was part of. A series of actions carried out in Barcelona and Sabadell in September 1960 justified the existence of the group, which gained popularity as a result of painting in public in Barcelona’s Plaça Catalunya.

For Borrell, who was using the language of abstraction and producing intimate, contained work, light years away from public gesturing and defiant attitudes, Gallot proved to be an unsettling and disconcerting experience. His participation in the group could be said to be oblique, from the angle of his own particular experience. In the second part of the exhibition, this oblique line connects two points: Borrell’s abstract paintings dating from the 1950s, before Gallot, and his later works that use the distinctive language he had developed by the mid-1970s.

Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1960

Oil on canvas

124 x 124 cm



Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1960

Oil on cardboard

75 x 105 cm



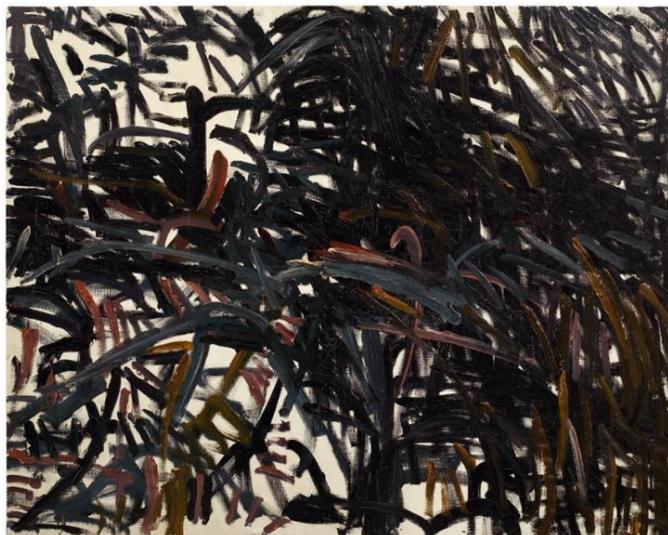
Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1962

Oil on canvas

127.5 x 158 cm



3. Opening and Overflow: Dark Water

"I use four colours directly, pigments, out of the tube: I don't mix. They are the colours of the earth. The green is somewhat greyish, not the green of springtime. The blue is ultramarine, which is a universal blue: it could be the sea, it could be the sky. The orange is the colour of life, light. The ochre is the colour of sun-baked fields. The dark colour isn't black: it's grey. It's the vision of doubt. What I like about it isn't the fact that it's supposedly serious, but the fact that grey is a barrier without colour."

The works assembled in this section put the spotlight on an attitude that runs through Borrell's entire oeuvre, which could be described as the gesture of opening up to nature as a dynamic, ever-changing force. This gesture contrasts with the tendency towards contraction and inwardness in the works displayed in the following section. According to Vilapuig, the key to the power of Alfons Borrell's work lies in this constant back-and-forth between opening up and withdrawing. The gesture of opening up inherently contains the notion of overflow, given the impossibility of fixing that which refuses to be fixed in paint. This is the sense in which this section recovers the film *Aigua fosca*, which Borrell made in 1964: a short experimental work that illustrates the idea of change and overflow through the metaphor of the "dark water" of a river, dynamic and ever-changing, impossible to hold back.

Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1977

Oli on canvas

74 x 92 cm



Alfons Borrell

26-VII-91

1991

Acrylic on canvas

195 x 240 cm



Alfons Borrell

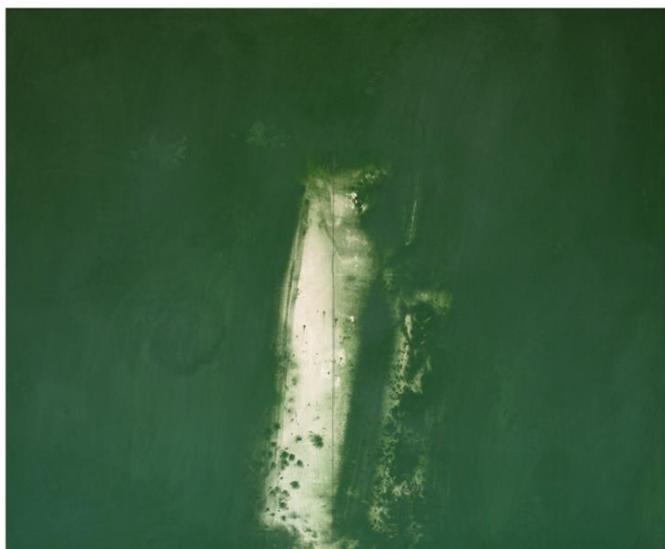
13-I-10

2010

Acrylic on canvas

160 x 195 cm

Fundació Vila Casas Collection



4. Contained Action: Pieces that Suggest Themselves

“Because I didn't owe anybody anything, I produced very radical work. I made no concessions. [...] Poetry, which is a synthesis of the word, goes well with my work, which always focuses on minimums”.

The works in this fourth section can be seen as an attempt to create a space of order and contention within a language that folds in on itself. Unlike the evocations of nature in the works assembled in the previous section, here the work ceases to refer to the outside world and simply expresses its own autonomous presence. The renunciation of colour in favour of the use of black and white as sole elements – mainly in works from the late seventies, although Borrell also used this approach in abstract works from the late fifties – reinforces this sense of containment. In the late seventies, Borrell also embarked on a path towards a language of abstraction with a radical singularity that was unique among his peers at the time.

Alfons Borrell

15-XI-78

1978

Acrylic on canvas

114 x 146 cm



Alfons Borrell

12-VI-80

1980

Acrylic on canvas

54 x 65 cm



Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1976

Acrylic on canvas

130 x 160 cm



5. Experiencing the Boundaries: The Square Shape

“I don’t frame my paintings either, for many years now. Because the paint flows, the paint can’t be confined in a frame: it has a tendency to flee, to escape.”

From the late seventies onwards, attempts to delimit a space using a square or somewhat rectangular shape become a recurring feature of Borrell’s works. The presence of this square form in the paintings, either as a presence or an absence, invites us to reflect upon the experience of boundaries. This idea of the painting as a space with boundaries (physical and language boundaries) to be explored, which runs through Borrell’s entire oeuvre, is reflected in this fifth section.

Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1978

Acrylic on canvas

80 x 100 cm



Alfons Borrell

14-VIII-79

1979

Acrylic on canvas

73 x 92 cm



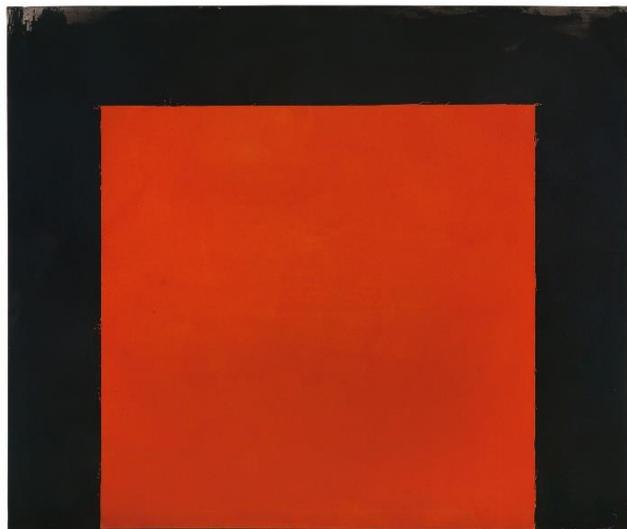
Alfons Borrell

8-II-88

1988

Acrylic and collage on canvas

170 x 200 cm



6. Colour as Subject: Orange

*"I think you are colour. I'd like to be paint.
When the sun rises in the morning you turn
orange, you're paint. When you walk
through a forest of trees, you turn green. If
there's a storm in the mountain, you turn
grey."*

For Borrell, colour is not just an attribute of an object, but a subject in itself. Colour moves, it fluctuates, it is alive and changing. It leaves the frame and pervades everything. This area of study focuses on the colour orange, which usually forms part of Borrell's palette and has symbolic connotations for him: it represents the dawn light that gives meaning to everything new in the form of life and hope; the light that begins each day and is conducive to work.

Alfons Borrell

20-IX-06

2006

Acrylic on canvas

160 x 200 cm



Alfons Borrell

24-IV-03

2003

Acrylic on canvas

89 x 116 cm

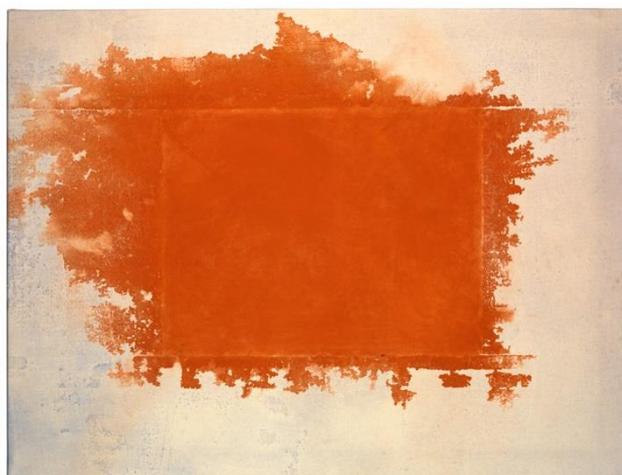


Alfons Borrell

17-III-03

Acrylic on canvas

89 x 116 cm



7. Repetition and Variation in the Work of Alfons Borrell

*"[...] draw a lot, draw a lot, draw a lot.
[...] I discovered that when you draw a lot
you learn. That drawing is mechanical."*

This last section of the exhibition focuses on a practice that constantly comes up in Alfons Borrell's work, which goes beyond simple methodology and includes basic elements that define his artistic language. This practice is related to the idea of repetition and variation, and it has taken the form of an oeuvre on paper that is both extensive and intensive. These series on paper are not a projection or an expression of a pre-existing original idea, but a process in which gesture is used to capture forms, in the sense of the varying, changing world, as a result in itself.



Alfons Borrell

Untitled

1982

Acrylic and pencil on paper



Alfons Borrell

Series of 10 drawings

1970

Pencil on paper

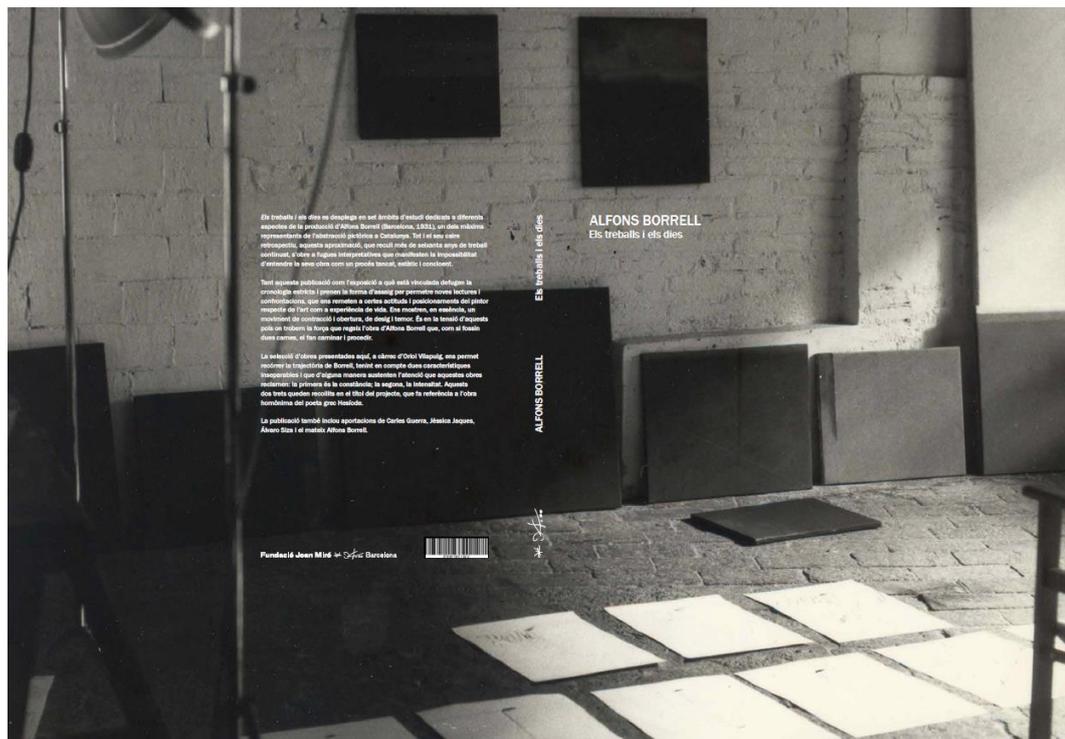
Publication

The accompanying publication emphasises the key aspects of Alfons Borrell's work through a non-chronological overview of his oeuvre. It includes texts by the exhibition's curator Oriol Vilapuig, the philosopher Jèssica Jaques, Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza, and the artist and critic Carles Guerra.

The catalogue explores Alfons Borrell's career through the seven sections that structure the exhibition.

The extensive documentation and digitisation carried out in the process of preparing the publication included Borrell's working papers, the notes he took when he visited Hermen Anglada Camarasa's studio, and previously unprinted photographs of works, with the aim of emphasising certain biographical details and contextualising the artist's works.

The Fundació Joan Miró has published two versions of the 216-page catalogue: Catalan/English and Spanish/English.



Book cover *Alfons Borrell. Works and Days*

Practical information

Opening times

Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 to 19.00

Thursdays from 10.00 to 21.00

Sundays and public holidays 10.00 to 14.30

Closed Mondays, except public holidays

Admission

7 €

Annual Pass

Admission to the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions during one year:

12 €

Press images and digital press kit at:

<http://www.fmirobcn.org/fundacio/press/>

Downloadable video about the exhibition at:

<http://vimeo.com/fundaciojoanmiro> and

<https://www.youtube.com/user/FundacioJoanMiro>

Follow the exhibition with the hashtag: #AlfonsBorrell

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