

History of the Hands

Antoni Abad, Isabel Banal,
Isabel Barrios, Damià Campeny,
Colita, Mirari Echávarri,
Raquel Frieria, Camille Henrot,
Fermín Jiménez Landa, Claudi
Lorenzale, Master of Cincorres,
Joan Morey, Antoni Muntadas,
Levi Orta, Pasqual Ortoneda,
María Sánchez, anonymous works
from the 13th, 15th, 16th and
18th centuries and a selection
of 20th century coins from the
Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia.

Curated by Alexandra Laudo

Itinerant exhibition 2022-24



p. 5	PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION BY THE VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMME OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF BARCELONA
p. 6	PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION BY THE CURATOR, ALEXANDRA LAUDO
p. 11	THEMATIC AREAS AND WORKS
p. 12	Hands, authority, power
p. 17	Hands, literacy, history
p. 21	Hands, control, determination
p. 24	Hands, work, care
p. 27	Hands, money, value
p. 31	Hands, the breasts, martyrdom
p. 35	Hands, medicine, the sick body
p. 40	Hands, desire, sin
p. 44	Hands, the beginnings, the endings
p. 50	VISITOR SERVICES
p. 50	Educational services
p. 53	Related activities
p. 54	Documentation space
p. 55	Accessibility
p. 56	BIOGRAPHIES
p. 62	THE TOURING CALENDAR
p. 63	CREDITS

Presentation of the exhibition
by the Visual Arts Programme
of the Provincial Council
of Barcelona

At the Visual Arts Programme, beyond supporting local contemporary art policies within our demarcation, and similarly, at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, beyond the gathering, studying, conserving and exhibition of its repository, our mission is to connect citizens with art, to facilitate access and the generation of ideas, creativity, education and knowledge. With "A History of the Hands" we wish to share these objectives with the councils participating in this itinerant exhibition, and its visitors.

"A History of the Hands" presents a dialogue between works by contemporary artists and those from the MNAC collection. The curator, Alexandra Laudo, articulates this dialogue in nine thematic areas – Hands, authority, power; Hands, literacy, history; Hands, control, determination; Hands, work, care; Hands, money, value; Hands, the breasts, martyrdom; Hands, medicine, the sick body; Hands, desire, sin and Hands, the beginnings, the endings – and puts forward a selection of twenty-five works by the artists Antoni Abad, Isabel Banal, Isabel Barios, Damià Campeny, Colita, Mirari Echávarri, Raquel Frieria, Camille Henrot, Fermín Jiménez Landa, Claudi Lorenzale, Master of Cincorres, Joan Morey, Antoni Muntadas, Levi Orta, Pasqual Ortoneda and María Sánchez, as well as anonymous works from the 13th, 15th, 16th and 18th centuries and coins from the 20th century.

With a willingness to offer resources to visitors in order to contextualise and explore further the themes and concepts of the exhibition, "A History of the Hands" offers an educational service, related activities, a documentation space and a catalogue. The exhibition also has different accessibility services: texts in Braille, with macro characters and easy-to-read versions, interpretation in sign language and adapted educational services.

In order to enrich this dialogue between works by contemporary artists and those from the MNAC collection, "A History of the Hands" invites the exhibition spaces participating in the tour to incorporate a local work or one linked to the municipality.

Presentation of the exhibition by the curator, Alexandra Laudo

At the origin of human history are the hands. Hands that distance themselves from the ground, which are freed from the biomechanical need to move forward touching the ground, supporting one's own weight, and then distributed between the four limbs.

Hands are also at the origin of the history of European art. Many human hands, probably women's, are silhouetted on the wall of a cave in Cantabria, one of which, 37,300 years old, is one of the oldest cave paintings in Europe.

By standing up on their two feet, the first hominin primates had freer hands, and this enabled them to touch the world in a different way, rediscover it and get to know it through new forms of contact. Those first humans also acquired new manual skills and developed tools, instruments and objects that would gradually transform the way they interacted, both with each other and with other living beings and the environment. Hominid hands and the material and symbolic culture they gave rise to, shaped and defined the origin of communication, work, cultural expressions and human socialisation.

The bipedal position, however, apart from enabling a freer and more skilled use of the hands, also allowed those first hominids to raise their torso and head and, consequently, see the world from new perspectives. Although, with respect to their knowledge of the environment, the eyes and hands – sight and touch – worked in alliance and in collaboration with each other. Over time, visual information became more and more important, competing with other sensory stimuli and, particularly, with touch. Visuality and images, especially since modernity, have assumed a socially pre-eminent place, which in recent times has been reinforced by the paradigm of connectivity and new technologies. These, at the same time, have been enforcing a digital culture, in which digital mediation has replaced a manual and direct relationship with the environment.

The exhibition “A History of the Hands” reviews some salient aspects of the cultural history of the hands and our tactile relationship with the world, based on a dialogue between contemporary works of art by current artists and a selection of pieces of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and modern art from the collection of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

The collected works invite us to think about the forms of communication, production, relationship and knowledge that over time have been articulated through hands and through contact. The exhibition also focuses on our progressive evolution, in recent times, towards a digital culture in which craftsmanship coexists with forms of relationships based on finger contact and the mediation of devices and touch screens, which mitigate and transform our physical relationship with the objects, people and other elements of our environment.

Paradoxically, “A History of the Hands” explores the function of the hands and the value of touch in Western culture, but it does so through manifestations that we cannot touch. These include works of art that we are allowed to see from a certain distance and that in some cases we can also hear, but that we cannot understand or feel through touch. Although hands are also at the origin of artistic creation —as a subject of representation and, at the same time, as an element that executes this manifestation— art is almost exclusively the realm of the image and vision. In accordance with this logic and with its function of preserving cultural heritage (that is, everything that in a certain way defines us as humanity and belongs to all of us), art museums and, in general, all museum institutions have become places where sight is prioritised over any other sense; a distance from the observed objects is imposed and touch is prohibited. It wasn't always like that. Before the middle of the 19th century, many objects and works of art that were part of private collections and public museums could be touched. The owners and curators of those collections, like those of today, were most likely aware that touching is sometimes, and in the long term, a way of damaging and eroding, as all touch causes deterioration and a slight wear. If they did not forbid this manipulation, it was because they considered that touch would provide knowledge which was just as important as sight.

Touch, in addition to providing us with information about the texture, weight, temperature and consistency of what we are touching, gives us the intensity and intimacy of a physical encounter. It even offers us the possibility of establishing a kind of deferred contact with all those before us who have previously touched what we touch now, an illusory evasion of the irreversibility of death, time and space. Throughout our existence we constantly touch skin, objects and surfaces that have been touched before, many of which will likely continue to be touched by other hands, both familiar and unfamiliar. From this perspective, we can think of hands and touch as a sense that, through skin which

is caressed, through surfaces that have been touched and palpated, unites humanity throughout time and in the distance of the spaces.

Despite the growing absence of touch and the prevailing predominance of a visual culture, humans currently touch certain objects very regularly. According to recent statistics, it seems that we touch our mobile phone (either to unlock it, touch a digital button or swipe the screen) an average of more than 2,600 times a day. If we were to transfer this tactile activity to any other element of our environment and, for example, touch a pencil, a flower or a work of art the same number of times, our behaviour would probably be labelled as pathological or eccentric. Even if what we were touching was not an object, but a loved one, such as a partner, lover, friend, parent, or child, this level of repeated contact would surely be considered strange or even obsessive.

The development of digital technologies and their deep infiltration in the workplace and in human communication have greatly redefined our tactile relationship with the world and have introduced new forms and types of contact with the environment and with people. Although in previous centuries a manual and analogue culture had predominated, based on direct contact (especially of the hands) with tools, natural elements, objects and people, digital technology has progressively introduced forms of apprehension and relationships with what surrounds us based on finger interaction, articulated for the most part through the contact of the fingers (often just one) with the surfaces of technological devices. A smartphone or tablet offers us the possibility to draw, make music or play chess without using a pencil, musical instrument or chessboard. This concentration of a multitude of functionalities and utilities in a single device, although leading to an optimisation of the material resources necessary to carry out various activities, also impoverishes and homogenises the sensuality linked to touch, as the diversity of textures, consistencies and temperatures that we experience when manipulating objects and analogue devices disappears, with the limitation of finger contact with the screen of these other digital devices.

The Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the lockdowns and social distancing protocols that were implemented to combat it, exacerbated some of these rationales. On one hand, contact with objects and people was drastically limited and subject to strict hygiene procedures. Hugs, kisses, handshakes and other forms of affection and socialisation expressed through physical interaction and body contact were severely restricted. The obligation to stay

at home for long periods of time and the generalisation of working from home meant that much of the communication between colleagues, friends and family members was conducted through digital devices and environments at a greater level. On the other hand, the impossibility of moving freely through public spaces, as well as the restricted access to theatres, cinemas, museums, libraries and other similar institutions, reaffirmed the positioning of the internet as the epicentre of entertainment and a huge part of cultural life. Many activities that were previously carried out in collective spaces, in which a sense of community and social life was reinforced, were moved to the privacy of the domestic realm.

However, even in the most critical moments of the pandemic, under the rigidity of the most invasive health protocols and the most extreme distancing measures, there was a gesture, an action, that often reminded us of the essence of tactility. Again and again, multiple times a day, we washed our hands. We scrubbed them with soap and water, or with hydroalcoholic gel, in a movement that made us both the subject who touches, and the object that was touched. Water, soap or gel seeped into our skin, penetrated it subtly and became, momentarily, part of our body, altering slightly and briefly what we were, and what we are. At the same time, these substances were also transformed, dissolved and spread, altered by the contact and action of the hands. Such a simple everyday gesture evoked the deep meaning of being a sensitive body in space, of travelling through it by touching the skins of other bodies and the surfaces of objects and places. It reminded us that touch is a form of reciprocity, that touching always equals being touched. To touch is to leave a part of us on the surface of the world and of others. It is also, at the same time, to change, to mutate, to be transformed in this contact that alters our individuality and allows us to be, momentarily, a plural singularity.

Alexandra Laudo [*Heroines of Culture*]

Thematic areas and works

Hands, authority and power

Anonymous
Altar frontal
of *Sant Pere de Boí*
Second half of
the 13th century

Dimensions:
91 × 158 × 10 cm
Weight: 35 kg
Temper, stucco reliefs
and remains of varnished
metal plate on wood

Purchased from the
Plandiura collection, 1932
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 003912-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022

Despite the specific meaning that each gesture has in a particular historical and cultural context, there is a formal correspondence in the body language with which, over time, power and authority are represented. The gestures of Jesus, the popes and other religious figures have a continuity in the repertoire of gestures that current politicians make in carrying out their functions, especially during public appearances.

This gesture associated with power is particularly evident in the hands. A raised index finger for emphasis, clasped hands as a sign of agreement, a clenched fist hitting a table or a hand waving to crowds are just a few examples of gestures which are easily identifiable with the exercise of authority and with the corpography of the rulers.

In the last two decades, new technologies, the use of wireless devices and the culture of connectivity have infiltrated not just all social spheres, but also political spheres. The internet has become a fundamental strategic space in the relationship between rulers and citizens, as well as in the management of visibility and public image. A new repertoire of positions and movements of the hands and fingers, derived from the use and manipulation of computers, tablets and mobile phones, as well as from the management of digital profiles and participation in social networks, has been taking shape and gaining relevance. Typing, clicking, tweeting or liking are actions that, compared to the grandiose gesticulation of harangues and public appearances by leaders, may seem modest and discreet. Yet, on the other hand, they also have a fundamental impact on the generation and administration of power.



This Romanesque panel represents scenes from the life and miracles of Saint Peter, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ and the first Pope of the Church, during the period of primitive Christianity. The episodes of the saint's life that are shown in this altarpiece are the moment when Emperor Nero orders his imprisonment; the discussion of Saint Peter and Saint Paul with Simon Magus, a figure who represents heresy; the imprisonment of St. Peter, and the prayer of St. Peter and St. Paul to the Mother of God for the fall of Simon the Sorcerer. Originally, in the lower right part, now deteriorated, the fall of Simon the Sorcerer

was also represented. The front is presided over by the portrait of Saint Peter as supreme pontiff of the Church, making the gesture of blessing with his right hand and holding with his left hand the staff, the ornament that symbolises his authority. Apart from these two gestures, the altarpiece depicts other postures and movements of the hands related to divine power and faith, such as the gesture of the prayers of the saints and that of the divine hand that blesses them from heaven, and also others related to violence, such as that of the soldiers wielding their swords.

Anonymous
Altar frontal from
Sant Climent de Taüll
 Second half
 of the 13th century

Dimensions:
 92.5 × 169 × 9 cm
 Temper and stucco
 reliefs with varnish
 remains on wood

Purchased from the
 Plandiura collection, 1932
 Museu Nacional d'Art
 de Catalunya, Barcelona
 MNAC 003908-000
 © Museu Nacional d'Art
 de Catalunya, Barcelona,
 2022



This Romanesque table depicts some scenes from the life and miracles of Saint Clement, who, according to various sources, was the first Pope of whom there are written records. The episodes of the saint's life shown in this altarpiece are the conversion to Christianity of Theodora, the wife of a powerful figure in the Roman Empire during the time of Emperor Trajan; the miracle of the fountain or the vision of the Agnus Dei, which Saint Clement performed in the Crimea, to where he was banished and forced to work in a quarry;

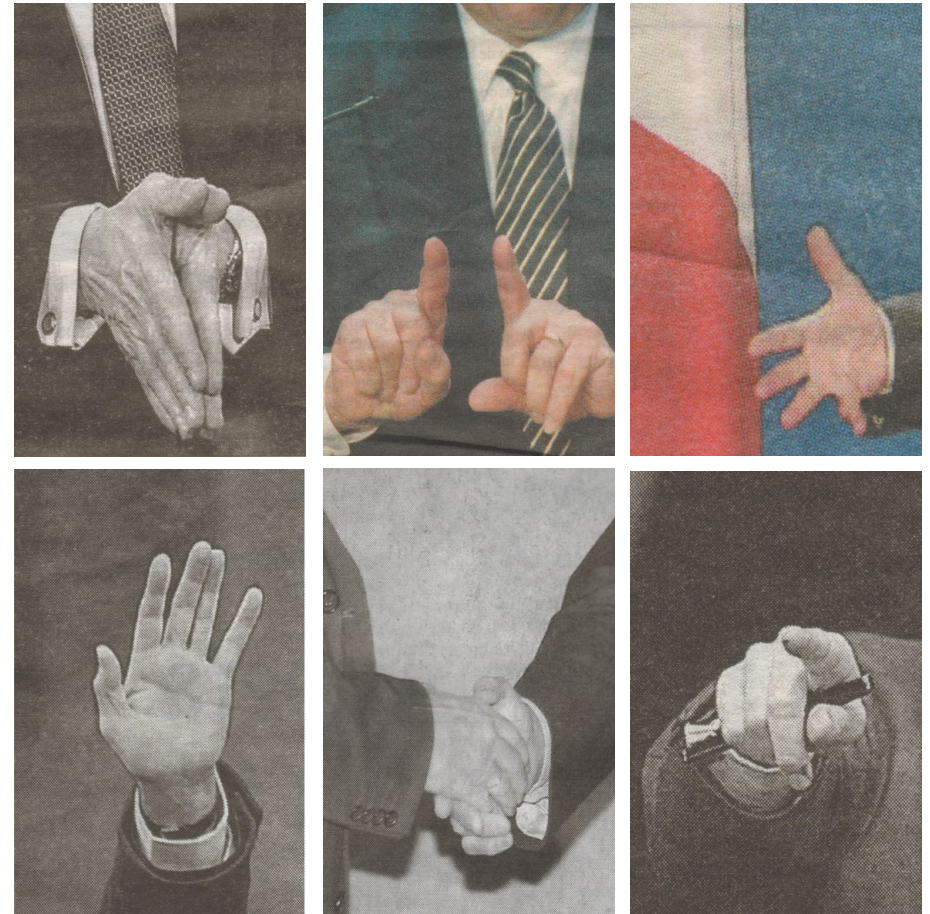
the moment when Trajan orders his martyrdom; the throwing of Saint Clement into the sea, to carry out Trajan's order, and a posthumous miracle of the saint, who saved a boy who was caught in the tide.

These scenes present a repertoire of hand gestures related to divine power and faith, such as blessing, prayer or the hand that performs a miracle, as well as others related to authoritarianism and violence, such as the raised finger of the ruler issuing an order or that of the soldiers attacking Saint Clement.

Antoni Muntadas
Gestures
 2003

Artist's notebook, facsimile
 55 photographs of 13.9 × 8.9 cm
 UV ink print on plain
 white natural polyester

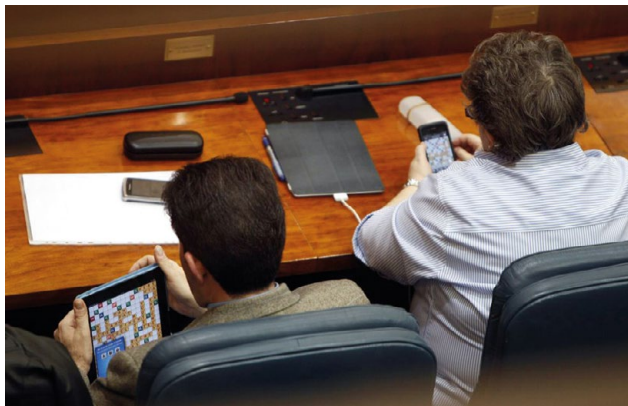
Edition: Bookstoring, Paris
 Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona
 © Muntadas, VEGAP,
 Barcelona, 2022



[Details]

Gestures brings together a collection of images of the hands of different politicians and officials, all cut from photographs published in French newspapers. Presented in this way, as anonymous body parts, these hands make up a visual repertoire of gestures associated with the exercise of power and its projection

in the public sphere. In *Gestures*, Muntadas uses the synecdoche to investigate the complex relationships between body, language and image that intervene in the construction of ideological discourse, as well as its representation in the media.



[Details]

Voyeur presents two sequences of images taken from the internet, in which different political representatives inadvertently engage in 'extracurricular' and leisure activities during the course of parliamentary debates, councils of state and other relevant meetings linked to holding office. In the images we see politicians reading books, doing crosswords, consulting the news and consuming pornography, many of them through computer screens, mobile phones and tablets. Among the images is, for example, that of John McCain playing a game of poker with

his phone in the United States Senate during the debate on a possible invasion of Syria in 2013.

The sequences are also presented to us on mobile devices, two tablets similar to those used by some of these politicians, powered by a disproportionately long electrical cable that coils and unfolds creating a crude shape in the space, which, according to the artist, alludes to the citizens, who with their energy, their money and their work force, sustain the inappropriate activities of the political classes.

Hands, literacy, history

The history of writing is linked to that of hands. But also to that of power, validating who is a legitimate witness or narrator, and regulating access to the resources and media that allow the construction of hegemonic discourses and the writing of history.

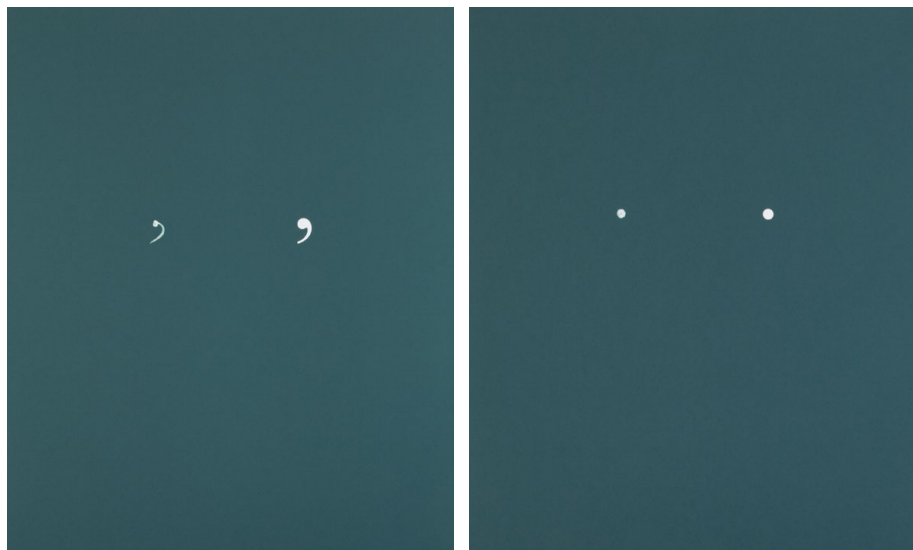
The ability to read and write also confers power, as it fosters autonomy and critical reasoning. For much of history, however, literacy and numeracy have been little accessible or even forbidden to a large part of society, especially women and other socially disadvantaged groups.

In recent years, the impact of digital culture has transformed the processes and habits of writing and reading, which are now very often deployed through screens and keyboards. Typing and touch interfaces have encouraged the emergence of new gestures related to reading and writing that detach it from pencils and pens, and books and paper.

Antoni Muntadas
Punctuations
2017

Folder of 15 lithographs,
47 × 38 cm each,
12 copies

Edition: Polígrafa Obra Gràfica
Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona
© Muntadas, VEGAP,
Barcelona, 2022



[Details]

In this series of lithographs, Muntadas reproduces a selection of alphanumeric symbols and signs of accentuation and punctuation, all of them related to language and communication. Each sign is presented to us in duplicate: in a calligraphic, handwritten version, which expresses the unique and singular stroke of the person who wrote it, and in another typographic, standardised and depersonalised version, which has been produced by technical means.

Among them, we can distinguish the at sign, which became popular with the emergence of email and which has become one of the most representative symbols of the internet and digital culture. The at sign was standardised as a

typographic symbol to represent the eponymous unit of weight, which originally, in its manuscript version, was possibly the simplified drawing of an amphora, like the earthenware vessels used in the Mediterranean for the transport and trade of goods, especially from the 16th century onwards. In medieval times, the at sign was also used by scribes, who joined the letters *a* and *d* to simplify the writing of the Latin preposition *ad*, which was used very frequently when writing.

Punctuations invites us to think about the history of writing and its relationship with the hands, as well as the impact of technology on forms of communication and the exchange of information.

Anonymous
Nottingham School
Saint Anne and the
Virgin as a Child
Mid-15th century

Dimensions:
94.8 × 31.2 × 12.4 cm
Weight: 60 kg
Carved alabaster with remains
of polychrome and gilding

Purchased from the
Plandiura collection, 1932
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 004353-000
© Museu Nacional
d'Art de Catalunya,
Barcelona, 2022



This sculpture represents Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, teaching her daughter to read. From the 11th century, with the growth of the worship of the Virgin Mary, the idea that, as the mother of Christ, Mary had to be a wise and educated woman, with outstanding spiritual and intellectual gifts, gained strength. A specific iconography then emerges that presents the Virgin Mary with a book in her hands, reading or writing, or being taught from books by her mother, Saint Anne, also considered a wise woman. Historian Pamela Sheingorn states that the iconographic motif of Saint Anne teaching the Virgin Mary, related to female literacy and the transmission of knowledge through the maternal route, was quite popular in Catholic Europe, from the beginning of the 14th century until modern times. This iconography contributed to promoting the role of mothers as educators of daughters, and the image of girls as capable students, eager for knowledge.

Sheingorn suggests that modern historiography, more focused on the study of male education, has neglected this aspect of medieval culture.

The life of Saint Anne and, to a large extent, also that of the Virgin Mary – who in the New Testament is mentioned only discreetly and episodically – comes from the apocryphal gospels, texts that were written during the same period as the canonical gospels, in the first centuries of Christianity, and which also refer to the life and mystery of Jesus, but which for various reasons have not been recognised by the Church or included in the canon of the Bible.

This is an alabaster from England, a country that notably stood out in the production of figures with this material. At Nottingham School and in other specialised centres in the country, a serial, almost industrial production of alabaster sculptures was carried out, which were then distributed internationally.

Damià Campeny Estrany
Mataró, 1771 – Barcelona,
1855

*Fama writing the
story of Christ:
Holy Family*
*Fama writing
the story of Christ:
Jesus at the Temple*
Circa 1816

Dimensions:
31 × 24 × 2.5 cm
Weight: 1.745 g
Terracotta
Dimensions:
29 × 22.5 × 1.5 cm
Weight: 1.413 g
Terracotta

Purchased, 1922
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 010401-000
MNAC 010398-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022

Hands, control, determination

The phrases 'take the reins' or 'carry the reins' contain an implicit reference to the hands and describe, colloquially, a proactive and determined attitude towards life. The expression 'opening doors' has a similar meaning and also incorporates the allusion to a way of moving forward in the social framework that promotes opportunities and advantageous situations for oneself. These popular expressions show that the motif of the hands is associated with the ability to execute and act with determination, as well as the idea of mastery and control of a situation.



These terracottas present the Fama writing two scenes from the history of Christ: that of the child Jesus with the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph (an iconographic motif known as the Holy Family) and the arrival of Jesus at the temple, already in his adult life.

Fama is an allegorical figure that in Roman mythology was the messenger of Jupiter and represented the public voice in charge of reporting and spreading information about the lives of others, without distinguishing whether it was true facts, or rumours and falsehoods. Virgil, in the Aeneid, places her at the centre of the world, in a sound palace with many openings through which voices penetrate. He describes her as a winged figure with many mouths and many eyes, travelling through the sky at full speed. In iconography, she is often represented with two trumpets, referring to her inability to distinguish between truth and lies.

Damià Campeny presents Fama as a maiden without wings but accompanied by birds. He places her in the foreground, writing, while the related events appear in a vaguer representation to the upper right. The separation between the two levels of representation, that of writing and that of recreated events, invites us to think about the distinction between the story and life, between history and events, and who has the resources, the power and the authority to create the hegemonic narrative.

The two terracottas belong to a sculptural series that the artist produced, commissioned by the Gremi de Revenedors (Resellers Guild), for the base of the religious figures in the Holy Week procession. Campeny, one of the greatest Spanish exponents of neoclassical sculpture, carried out this work in around 1816, shortly after returning from Italy, where he lived and worked for several years.

Fermín Jiménez Landa
The Doors
2012

Video, colour, sound,
8' 34"



[Frames]

The Doors is a video that documents the action that the artist Fermín Jiménez Landa took when he set out to go from his home to the La Casa Encendida art centre in Madrid, following a certain premise: do not touch, open or close any door, and do not explicitly ask anyone to do it for him. This seemingly simple restriction causes him numerous complications and considerably lengthens the duration of his journey. After overcoming a series of challenges and difficulties, the artist finally manages to reach Madrid, goes to La Casa Encendida and enters through the door, which in this case he finds open. Jiménez Landa describes the action as a romantic and absurd feat, as a strange variation of situationist *dérive*. It is also

an exercise in becoming aware of everything that escapes us when we decide not to act proactively, when we put ourselves at the mercy of the will of others. At the same time however, the work highlights everything that, on the contrary, is offered to us at the right time, when we need it most, without needing to intercede with the world or, rather, letting it sympathise with us. *The Doors* invites us to also think about everything that a society of performance discriminates against, but that a museum welcomes, in all those absurd and at the same time full of meaning feats that, after circulating through crevices and narrow passages, find in the artistic institution an open door.

Claudi Lorenzale
Sugranyes
Barcelona, 1816-1889
Study of two hands
holding flanges
Circa 1850-1870

Dimensions: 22.7 × 32 cm
Pencil and carbon
on vellum paper

Purchased, 1918
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 005989-D
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



The title of this drawing alludes to the position of the hands in the action of holding bridles, perhaps as part of a horse-riding activity or, more likely, driving a carriage pulled by horses. The first motor cars arrived in Catalonia at the end of the 19th century, and it wasn't until well into the 20th century that they became popular among the upper classes. Until then, the most common vehicles were carts and horse-drawn carriages.

The hands, in direct contact with the bridles, suggest a way of life in which dexterity and manual skill were important for the

successful development of work and everyday life, and also evoke a pre-industrial imaginary, prior to the mass introduction of machines and electrical devices in production systems, in communications, transport and the domestic environment.

The artist, Claudi Lorenzale, most likely created this drawing as part of his teaching activity at Escola Llotja, where he was the teacher of artists such as Marià Fortuny, Josep Tapiró and Antoni Caba. It is possible that it is not a life drawing, drawn from a human model, but derived from the observation of a print.

Hands, work, care

The hands are the anatomical element of reference in relation to which the concept of work has been expressed over time. Manual strength, dexterity and skill have been essential in defining key areas of labour relations and production models and have had a decisive influence on shaping aspects related to profit, cost, remuneration and productivity. Certain types of work, such as domestic and reproductive tasks and those linked to the care and attention of children or the elderly in the private context, have traditionally fallen to women and have remained outside the labour regulations and remuneration, and of social visibility. With the advent of industrialisation and the progressive incorporation of women into factories and the world of work in general, these irregularities have persisted in the form of discriminatory differences in the consideration of the value and remuneration of their work.

Raquel Frieria
*One Year Women's
Performance* (selection)
2015-2016

Installation with index cards,
photographs and audio track
Varying dimensions

Project carried out with the participation of Fina Aluja, Agustina Bassani, Lali Camós, Priscila de Castro, Francisca Duarte, Gemma Molera, Claudia Murcia, Naia Roca, Júlia Sánchez, Aina Serra, Júlia Solé and Carol Webnberg



[Detail]

This project by Raquel Frieria takes as its starting point the performance *One Year Performance 1980-1981 (Time Clock Piece)*, by Tehching Hsieh, which the Taiwanese artist carried out in his studio in Soho, New York, when he lived there illegally as an undocumented immigrant. Over the course of an entire year, at every hour of the day and night, Tehching Hsieh took a photograph and marked a timecard on a time clock, a device used in certain work contexts to record the time when a worker starts and ends his working day. With this action, of extreme physical intensity, Hsieh suggested that the work of the artist is permanent, that it never ends and that it cannot be evaluated with the same parameters of productivity, presence and performance that apply to other types of work.

The artist Raquel Frieria wanted to highlight how this claim is equally valid in relation to the domestic and care work that women carry out in

their family environments, and that, despite not being remunerated or recognised in the labour system and in the official economic indicators, they are essential for the sustainability and proper functioning of the capitalist system.

Frieria put forward a similar idea to a group of twelve women. Over the course of a year, with each woman taking part in a specific month, they record the time they spent each day carrying out domestic or care tasks, using the same means as Tehching Hsieh. Additionally, the women also recorded, through an oral account, certain tasks and commitments that could not be translated in terms of a schedule.

To the individual, solitary and male figure of Hsieh, Frieria contrasts the feminine and plural dimension of this group of women, suggesting, perhaps, that resistance to the abuses of capitalism must be constituted from a feminist subjectivity and class.

Colita

Workers on the loom
Work in the home A
Work in the home B
1977 (1980 edition)

Dimensions:
i. d. 12 × 18.5 cm each
Black and white
Gelatine and silver
on selenium stained
baryta paper

Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona. Repository
of the Generalitat de Catalunya
National Photography Collection,
2015
MNAC 251606-000
MNAC 251607-000
MNAC 251608-000
Photography: Museu Nacional
de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022
© Colita

Hands, money, value

Money moves from hand to hand over years and distance. In recent decades, however, the widespread use of debit and credit cards and payment systems through mobile devices, as well as the rise of e-commerce, have significantly reduced the circulation of cash and boosted forms of digital economic transaction which are less tangible and eliminate the contact between the hands of the buyer and the seller, of the giver and the receiver.

Trade, initially, was based on bartering, that is to say, in an exchange of merchandise and goods which changed hands and, therefore, ownership. The bartering system, however, meant that each party needed or wanted exactly what the other party offered and that the value of the products to be exchanged was, from an objective point of view, more or less equivalent.

Unlike the price fixed in money, however, the value that a good can have for someone has a strongly subjective component. In order to regulate the differences between the value that each party assigned to the object that they wanted to exchange, they began to use reference units of exchange, which were frequently used items or others that, in the majority of cases, were highly valued. Over time, what was finally added came in the form of metal coins, possibly because it was easily transportable and resistant, and also because, being made of metal, it already had an intrinsic value.



These photographs belong to the photographic series of working women that Colita took during the initial years of the Spanish Transition. With them, she wanted to document and give visibility to some of the main demands of the feminist political struggle of those years. With regards to work, this struggle was mainly focused on the demand for the recognition of the social rights of domestic workers and the implementation of labour policies that did not discriminate against women. These were demands that, despite the progress of the feminist cause, still have not been met. For this itinerant exhibition, three photographs were selected, of which only one is shown at each location for conservation reasons. Although all three were taken in 1977, each photograph documents a different reality regarding the situation of women in the

workplace. They also reflect a different stage in the history of hands in relation to manual work and the technology. The photograph *Work in the Home (B)* portrays a woman sewing by hand in her home. *Work in the Home (A)* also presents us with a woman sewing in a domestic environment, but in this case making use of a sewing machine, and with a preparedness and tidiness that encourages us to see her work as specialised yet not recognised as employment. The third photograph, *Workers on the loom*, as we can gather from the title, places us in the context of the insertion of women into the context of labour and, specifically, in the textile industry, which in Catalonia had a particularly important relevance and which, in large part, was sustained by the specialised, but poorly paid, work of many women.

1 Republic of Panama

Balboa, 1931
Weight: 26.71 g
Maximum diameter: 38 mm
Axis: 6 h
Silver
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 067322-N

3 Husayn Kamil, Sultan of Egypt and Sudan

2 Milliemes, 1916
Weight: 4.1 g
Maximum diameter: 20 mm
Axis: 12 h
Copper and nickel alloy
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 104046-N

5 State of Israel

Agora, 1963
Weight: 1.03 g
Maximum diameter: 20 mm
Axis: 12 h
Aluminium
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 111833-N

7 Abdullah II, King of Jordan

Half dinar, 1421 AH = 2000
Weight: 9.52 g
Maximum diameter: 29 mm
Axis: 12 h
Nickel, copper and aluminium
Anonymous donation, 2005
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 309976-000

9 Hong Kong

2 dollars, 1989
Weight: 8.35 g
Maximum diameter: 28 mm
Axis: 12 h
Copper, nickel and zinc
Donated by Josep Corominas i Espunya, 2017
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 331376-000

2 Republic of India

5 paisas, 1962
Weight: 3.98 g
Maximum diameter: 22 mm
Axis: 12 h
Copper and nickel alloy
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 068166-N

4 Pu Yi, Emperor of China

Cash, 1910-1912
Weight: 1.22 g
Maximum diameter: 16 mm
Axis: 12 h
Brass
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 106782-N

6 Republic of Kenya

5 Kenyan shillings, 1985
Weight: 13.47 g
Maximum diameter: 30 mm
Axis: 12 h
Copper and nickel alloy
Antique repository of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 112230-N

8 Australia

50 cents, 1998
Weight: 15.68 g
Maximum diameter: 32 mm
Axis: 12 h
Copper and nickel alloy
Donated by Rosemary Thwaite, 2007
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 310518-000

10 Juan Carlos I, King of Spain

50 pesetas, 1996
Weight: 5.54 g
Maximum diameter: 25 mm
Axis: 6 h
Copper and nickel alloy
Donated by Arturo Godó, 2018
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 331987-000



“What coins from all over the world have in common, is the fact that they move from hand to hand in every small daily transaction. The obverse and the reverse are two physical spaces that, through images and inscriptions, favour the sense of sight.

By comparison, the edge of the coin is the tactile side. The diversity of subtle or conspicuous

shapes that it takes not only beautify the pieces, but also facilitate their identification as they can be felt without having to be looked at.”

Albert Estrada-Rius, chief curator of the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

María Sánchez
We won't delay
2014-2020

Action - Installation
Objects and polaroids
on panels

Museum Centro
de Arte Dos de Mayo collection
Photography: Provincial Council
of Barcelona, Barcelona 2022
© Pau Fabregat



The installation *We won't delay* draws from a series of actions in which María Sánchez inadvertently changes a personal object for an equivalent and anonymous one, for public use. At the Nebraska café in Madrid, the artist left her favourite cup and took the one which she had been served her coffee in; in a hotel room, she exchanged the sheets from her own home for those on the bed; in a library, she exchanged a Clarice Lispector book for her own copy.

Each exchange involves a small act of detachment, a renunciation of continuing to be close to a certain object linked to one's own life, to the use and touch of it, with which the

artist had established a certain emotional bond. At the same time, the exchange also involved the adoption of a new object, and with it, the possibility of creating a newfound affection and gaining new experiences from things that, unsurprisingly, shouldn't be important to the artist. The collected objects thus represent a kind of opening towards what was improbable and unknown.

From the set of actions, subtle, small, but deeply moving, there is also a certain desire to occupy a space in the anonymity of the world, to leave traces of the intensity of what is loved and what has been experienced.

Hands, the breasts, martyrdom

Through the hands and the skin as a whole, we establish physical contact with our environment and with others. Attention, care, affection and love are often expressed and formalised through the contact of hands with other bodies. Paradoxically, it is also through the hands that harm and pain are often inflicted.

Mirari Echávarri López
Bodies #1 Saint Agatha
2017

VHD, sound, colour, 11' 43"

Distributor: Hamaca
Experimental video
platform



In the audiovisual piece *Bodies #1 Santa Agatha*, Mirari Echávarri draws from an altarpiece of the martyrdom of Saint Agatha to address questions related to touch, the skin, the female body, gender construction, maternal-filial relationships, illness, aggression and affection. The artist also reflects on the possibility of generating, through filming, a haptic experience that, as pointed out by Gilles Deleuze, overcomes the dichotomy between eye and hand and

produces a tactile vision, in which touch would be stimulated through the image.

The piece combines theoretical references with personal reflections and the telling of anecdotes and biographical experiences. These discursive elements are integrated into a visual narrative that combines photographs from the artist's family album with footage of herself and her everyday surroundings, to bring about a personal, unique and heterodox video essay.

Anonymous
Flemish School
Nursing Madonna
Between 1505-1525

Dimensions:
57.5 × 39 × 2.5 cm
Dimensions with annexes:
71 × 53.5 × 5 cm
Paint on wood

Purchased from the
Muntadas collection, 1956
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 064092-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



This table represents the Virgin Mary nursing the baby Jesus, a scene that is part of the episodes of Christ's childhood and that has a long tradition as an iconographic motif in Western Christian art. The image of the *Virgo lactans* ('Nursing Virgin', or 'Nursing Madonna') was interpreted by the Church as a symbolic representation of a spiritual food that goes beyond the relationship between the Virgin and Jesus and that nourishes all of humanity. From the 11th century, devotion to the Virgin became important, and this growth in the veneration of Mary also led to a greater interest in the aspects of everyday life. During the

Renaissance, Christian art proliferated the representation of situations of domestic life related to, for example, food preparation, childcare and cleaning tasks. In this context, the image of the Virgin nursing the baby Jesus also became very popular. Following the Council of Trent, however, the Catholic Church began to limit this iconographic motif for reasons of shame, since the bare breast of the Virgin Mary is considered indecent. This painting was made for a domestic space and was intended for private prayer by an individual or a family, in the privacy of their home.

Anonymous
Saint Lucy
Between 1500-1540

Dimensions:
107 × 41.5 × 25 cm
Weight: 20.2 kg
Polychrome and
gilded wood

Bequeathed by José Antonio
Bertrand Mata, 1970;
acquired, 1981
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 131081-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



This wood carving represents Saint Lucy, a young woman from a wealthy family educated in the Christian faith who, at the time of the Roman emperor Diocletian, suffered persecution and martyrdom for defending her faith. Saint Lucy took a vow of chastity because she wanted to consecrate her life to God, but her mother betrothed her against her will to a man of pagan faith.

Saint Lucy's mother fell ill, and they both went to pray at the tomb of Saint Agatha, who had suffered martyrdom for defending the Christian faith. Afterwards, her mother recovered from the disease and agreed to break the engagement with the pagan. The

man was outraged and denounced the girl to a Roman court, which sentenced her to abandon Christianity and worship the gods. After Saint Lucy's refusal, the girl was subjected to various forms of torture, including the extraction of her eyes and, finally, her beheading.

In this carving, Saint Lucy is presented to us with a piece of silver on which her two eyes rest, the attribute that iconographically identifies her, and with a closed book held in her left arm, which probably indicates that she was an educated woman, knowledgeable in the scriptures and able to read and write. Saint Lucy is the patron saint of ophthalmologists and dressmakers, trades which are related to eyesight.

Hands, medicine, the sick body

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the practice of dissecting corpses for scientific purposes, until then forbidden by the Church, began to be more widely accepted, and gradually became established as a routine procedure in medical study. The human body was consolidated as the basic and central reality of medicine, and thus began a growing development of anatomical science and surgery, which reached its peak during the Renaissance. This anatomical revolution was not only spurred on by doctors, but also by artists, interested in acquiring a greater knowledge of the human body in order to better represent it figuratively. Artists such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci witnessed anatomy lessons and even took an active part in some dissections. The anatomical lessons, carried out by the hands of doctors with the complicit interest of artists, made it possible to understand what the human body was like inside. Paradoxically, this fact aroused a growing interest in touch and the skin, when it became apparent that this is not a mere covering of the human interior, but the outermost part of a sum of layers and tissues in a body that is one organic whole. The distinction between outside and inside was blurred. The skin was understood as a profound surface.

Since then, in medical practice the contact between the doctor's hands and the patient's body is important both in the identification of symptoms and in the treatment and care processes. However, the progressive implementation in the modern era of imaging diagnosis and, more recently, the introduction of robotic arms in surgical procedures, along with other factors, have diminished the practice of recognising and treating the diseased body through touch. The health crisis caused by the Covid-19

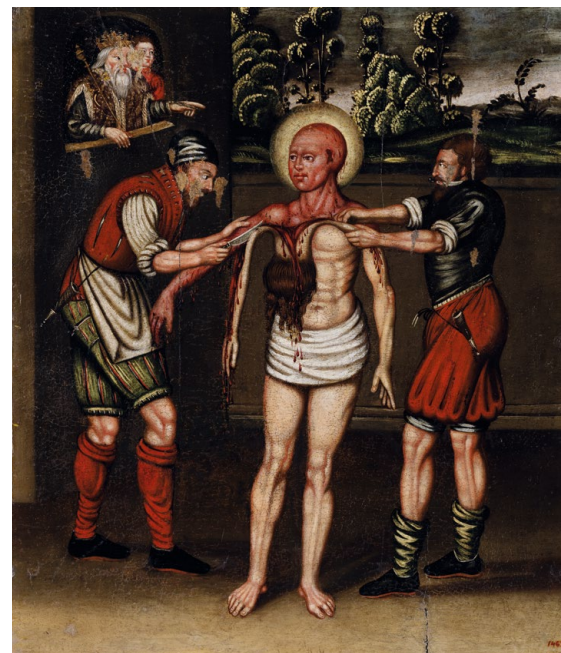
pandemic has accentuated this trend, with the widespread implementation of safe distances, individual protection equipment for health workers and remote medical monitoring systems for patients.

The pandemic has also boosted awareness of the fact that hands, in constant contact with the environment, can provoke contagion and spread diseases. Contact and hands emerge, in this new paradigm, as something that can put the individual in a vulnerable situation. If, in general, proximity and contact are experienced positively in human relationships and for the creation of emotional bonds, in this new context hands and touch are perceived as something that can potentially cause harm and put us in danger.

Anonymous
The Martyrdom
of Saint Bartholomew
 Second half of
 the 16th century

Dimensions: 60.5 × 53 × 4 cm
 Dimensions with annexes:
 62 × 54.5 × 4 cm
 Oil on wood

Collection of Enriqueta
 Bordas, widow of Frederic
 Bordas, 1909
 Museu Nacional d'Art
 de Catalunya, Barcelona
 MNAC 014628-000
 © Museu Nacional d'Art de
 Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



During the 16th and 17th centuries, as a result of the anatomical revolution, there was an enormous interest in the skin, which was manifested both in the natural sciences and in the humanities. In this context, images of skinning became popular and, in the artistic field, certain iconographic themes of martyrdoms in which this type of torture is represented gain notoriety. One of the most famous is that of Saint Bartholomew, an apostle of Jesus Christ who, following his preaching and refusal to worship pagan idols, was condemned to suffer martyrdom by order of Astyages, king of Armenia. Saint Bartholomew was skinned alive, and, for this reason, he is often depicted

with a knife or with his torn skin gathered under his arm.

This work has recently been restored, as it was in a poor state of repair before it was exhibited at "A History of the Hands". In the past, the painting was the object of devout vandalism, acts of aggression perpetrated by faithful Christians who expressed their devotion by damaging the pagan figures represented in the painting. The marks of these attacks, still detectable, make the painting also reveal itself to us as a body, whose surface, like human skin, changes, degrades and is vulnerable to aggression and the passage of time.

Joan Morey
SOCIAL BODY.
Anatomy lesson
2017

Display, objects, text

Photography:
Provincial Council
of Barcelona,
Barcelona 2022
© Pau Fabregat



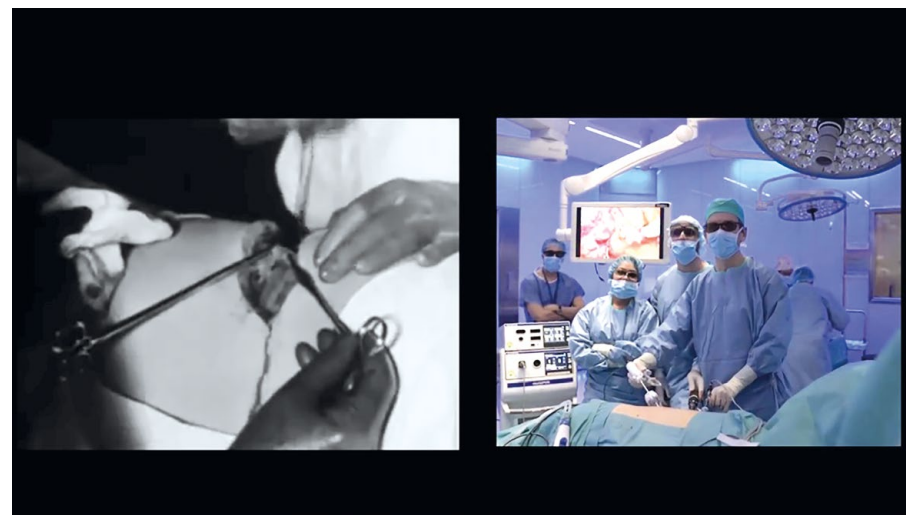
This display is a work derived from Joan Morey's project *SOCIAL BODY. Anatomy Lesson* (2017), a filmed performance given in the anatomical amphitheatre of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Catalonia, which uses the iconographic element of the anatomy lesson to reflect on the social construction of the body in contemporary Western culture. In this performance, a naked man occupies the centre of the amphitheatre. He is surrounded by a group of characters who observe the scene while one of them examines him, not through dissection, but through osteopathy, an alternative medical practice that relies on a series of manual techniques that provide information about the state of the body inside. In Morey's anatomy lesson, apart from the performers and those operating the cameras, there is no outside spectator observing the scene. Instead, there are two cameras that record everything, like eyes, which also appear in the video, diluting with their presence the distinctions between on-scene and off-camera, between the recorded subjects and objects and the technical machinery used to make the recording. One is a camera operated by hand

by a filmmaker, whose movements are determined by the organic and irregular motility of the operator's body. The other is a mechanised camera, whose movements respond to its precise and regular technological materiality. In contrast to the protagonist, who remains inert and at the mercy of the procedures that the performers carry out with their bodies, both cameras seem to rise as conscious objects that act autonomously and that, as the action progresses, come closer and closer to the naked body, as if they wanted to touch it. The work invites us to think about the depoliticisation that the subject suffers when it is reduced to a body and considered in terms of scientific utility.

The display includes various elements related to the theoretical, historical and aesthetic context of the project, as well as objects and materials from the process of making the performance and photographs that document the action. Carefully placed in the illuminated transparent glass display case, they are clearly visible to us but remain distant, inaccessible to the touch.

Isabel Barrios Ibars
Invisible hands
2019

Video HDV, colour, sound,
7' 10"



[Frames]

The word surgery comes from the Greek terms *kheir* ('hand') and *ergon* ('work'), and literally means 'manual work'. Operating theatres are environments subject to strict cleaning and disinfection processes, in which the use of sterile gloves is mandatory, and where there is a rigid protocol on how to touch the various objects and instruments. Even then, it is touch that is of paramount importance in surgery, since the hands are responsible for performing the surgical procedures: taking the scalpel, cutting into the skin and flesh, cutting, extracting what is malignant, stitching the wound, etc.

Invisible hands is a video essay that takes, as its object of study, the Da Vinci System surgical robot to reflect on robotic medical procedures

and the subsequent decrease in manual human intervention on the patients' bodies. Using the mechanism of the split screen, on one hand there is footage of robotic surgical operations and on the other, there are images of traditional surgeries, performed directly on the patients' bodies by a human team. The audiovisual piece is structured around a fictitious dialogue between three surgeons, who explain the attributes and benefits of robotic surgery, and the French philosopher Jacques Ellul, who questions the unstoppable progress of the technical system in contemporary society. The work questions the place of gesture in robotics and the function of human hands as they are being progressively replaced by mechanical elements.

Hands, desire, sin

María Sánchez
Metro
2016-2017

Sequence of videos made
with a mobile phone
Sound, colour, 9'
Varying dimensions

Hands can be sinful, impure, uncivil or criminal when they carry out certain actions or touch what they are not supposed to touch. Social conventions, religious beliefs, codes of conduct, law and moral values help to establish, at each moment and in each context, the limits of what we are allowed to touch and hold and what we are not, as well as the appropriate and inappropriate ways to do so.

Hands, skin and touch are also closely linked to desire, sexuality and physical pleasure, experiences that over time have been regulated by morality, religion and ideology. In Christian iconography, the sinful and impure soul is often represented as threatened or consumed by the flames of the fire of purgatory or hell. Interestingly, in the literary and artistic tradition, the motif of fire, the burning body and burning skin has also served to describe and represent the desire and pleasure of bodies in sexual union. Similarly, the inability to touch the body of the loved or desired person is often described too as a condemnation.



[Detail]

Metro documents a set of actions that María Sánchez performs on the subway, in which she touches strangers with her finger, hand or bare foot by rubbing their clothes, hair or skin, more or less discreetly, but without being able to avoid, in some cases, the person she touches or the other travellers noticing. The movements of the artist, delicate but daring, generate in the observer a growing tension and deferred fear regarding the possible adverse reactions that her actions may arouse. The videos, recorded by the artist herself with her mobile phone, offer us a

subjective camera perspective that places us in the same position as her and that increases the tension we feel while watching them.

However, the nature of Sánchez's actions is ambivalent. On one hand, they go against correctness and violate the conventions that, tacitly and inaccurately, regulate social conduct. On the other, they also seem to respond to a desire to question the meaning and risks of such conventions, and to the intense desire to give and seek affection, to break down, through touch, the cold distance that turns others in strangers.

Anonymous
Purgatory soul
Purgatory soul
18th century

Dimensions: 91 × 34 × 14 cm
Dimensions: 91 × 24 × 8 cm
Weight: 2.3 kg
Gilded polychrome carving

Bequeathed by José Antonio
Bertrand Mata, 1970;
purchased, 1981
Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 131121-000
MNAC 131182-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



These two figures are souls in purgatory, an abstract space defined by Catholic theology in which, after death, souls go through a process of purification and atonement. The impurity of the soul is related to sin, to the performance of an action contrary to divine law or religious precepts. This sin is often associated with the body and specifically with sexual desire and pleasure, related to hands, skin and touch. According to the Church, in purgatory they suffered pain and punishments similar to those in hell; that is why it is common to represent impure souls being consumed by fire, like these two figures, who remain standing on burning logs as the flames reach their knees.

The two sculptures were possibly located on the side or bottom of an altarpiece made for a private house. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the production of domestic altarpieces that represented purgatory and the impurity of souls grew rapidly. These compositions, intended for private prayer, introduced the religious precepts that were preached in the churches, into the home environment. Their objective was to remind the faithful, in their daily lives, of the torments that threatened sinful souls, and to direct them towards repentance and pious behaviour. At the base of the plinth, on which they rest, we find a diabolical head that reinforces the idea of the omnipresent threat of hell.

Camille Henrot
Deep Inside
2005

35 mm film transferred to
video, colour, marker on film, 7'
Music composed
by Benjamin Morando
Song written by Nicolas Ker
and Camille Henrot

Galerie Kamel Mennour,
Paris/London
© Camille Henrot, VEGAP,
Barcelona, 2022



Deep Inside is both a simple and beautiful animated film, and a treatise on the complex relationships that link love, desire, sex, absence and loss. As the basis of her work, Camille Henrot uses a 35 mm pornographic film shot in the 70s and, hand-painting each of the frames, superimposes an animated film that shows us the scenes of love and heartbreak in a past relationship, like a dance. The protagonists, morbid and phantasmagorical, appear and disappear on the screen, with the fugitive intensity of memories. The film is accompanied by a sad and penetrating ballad that intensifies the nostalgia and sense of loss conveyed by the lyrics and visual narration.

The drawings, in their choreographic movement, reveal and partially hide the original images, weakening their explicit character and bringing them closer to the language of eroticism. By hybridising pornographic images with scenes from a lost love story, Henrot manages to endow the feigned and impersonal veracity of pornography with fullness and emotional intensity.

Deep Inside explores the relationship between emotions, feelings and the body, revealing that emotional pain is also physical, that passion can be painful, and that heartbreak is a form of desire.

Hands, the beginnings, the endings

Isabel Banal
Finish and begin
2020-2021

Dimensions: each photograph
20 × 20 cm
Six photographic diptychs
in light boxes

We come into the world through hands that help us to be born, to transit from intrauterine existence to life outside the womb. When we die, it is also the hands of others that take care of our inert and lifeless body, which, through this touch, is prepared to be buried and to disappear. Hands, in a crucial way, are therefore present at the beginning and end of life, at birth and at death.

Throughout our existence we constantly touch skin, objects and surfaces that have been touched before, many of which will likely continue to be touched by other hands, both familiar and unfamiliar. From this perspective, we can think of hands and touch as a sense that, through caressed skin, through the surfaces that have been touched and palpated, unites humanity throughout time and in the distance of the spaces.



[Details]



Shortly after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when regular hand washing was imposed as a measure to avoid the transmission and contagion of the virus, Isabel Banal began photographing the bars of soap used in this hygienic procedure. The artist photographed the bars of soap at two specific moments: when the bar was still new, just before using it, and at the moment before it was thrown away, when repeated use had worn it out. An element as everyday as a bar of soap and a gesture as natural as washing your hands took on, in that context, a new negative or, at the very least, ambiguous meaning, related to medical protocols, risk and disease, and capable of evoking the climate of anxiety and uncertainty raised by the pandemic.

In this photographic series, however, the artist arranges the bars of soap in a way that,

without breaking the logical order derived from their continual use, alters the usual association of a beginning with its corresponding end. This is because it presents us with binomials in which each used bar of soap is paired with a new immaculate bar of soap, and not the other way around, a meaning that is also highlighted in the title of the piece, *Finish and begin*. Banal therefore manages to reinforce the idea of process and cycle in relation to history, events and life, positively associating each ending with a new beginning. The series begins with a used bar, as the indication of the end of a previous process that is not shown to us and that, like a crisis, calls into question the existing order and opens up the possibility of starting anew.

Master of Cintores
Active in the Bishopric
of Tortosa

Birth of the Virgin and
Presentation of Mary
Circa 1400

Dimensions: 82.2 × 80.5 cm
Dimensions with support:
82.5 × 80.5 × 4 cm
Tempera on wood

Purchased, 1910
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 015853-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



From the 11th century onwards, the progressive growth of the veneration of Mary resulted, in the field of Christian art, in a proliferation of scenes related to the Virgin Mary and the different episodes of her life, mostly evolving from apocryphal literature. This panel, which was part of an altarpiece entirely dedicated to the Virgin, shows us two scenes from her childhood. On the left side, her birth; on the right, the moment when, as a little girl, she is taken to the temple by her mother and father, Saint Anne and Saint Joachim. In the scene of the birth of the Virgin, all the figures that appear are women: Saint

Anne, the newborn Mary and the three servants who assist the mother during childbirth. It is a scene that gives visibility to the importance of women in the development of work related to care, attention and affection within the context of the home and intimate circles.

The representation also gives significant attention to objects and elements of everyday life that, such as the bowl of broth, the brazier, the basin of water or the napkins, allude to the senses —especially touch— and enhance the material and sensory dimension of living.

Pasqual Ortoneda
Documented in Tarragona,
Huesca, Zaragoza, Monzón
and Barbastro, 1421-1460
Saint Anthony the
Abbot Burying Saint Paul
the Hermit
1437-1438

Dimensions:
151 × 76.6 × 7.5 cm
Tempera on wood

Purchased, 1958
Museu Nacional d'Art
de Catalunya, Barcelona
MNAC 065783-000
© Museu Nacional d'Art de
Catalunya, Barcelona, 2022



This painting shows Saint Anthony the Abbot burying his master, Saint Paul the Hermit, with the help of a tame lion who digs the pit, while the soul of the deceased rises to heaven. Saint Paul the Hermit and Saint Anthony the Abbot are considered the first Christian hermits and the propagators of this movement in Upper Egypt, from where it spread throughout the East.

Hermitism was a movement that sought spiritual perfection through solitude, prayer, contemplation and penance. It involved the abandonment of the comforts of social life, to assume a way of life characterised by austerity, the renunciation of pleasures and the restriction of the satisfaction of bodily needs. Hermitism is

built on a dualistic conception of the relationship between body and soul, and on the rejection of the sensory and material dimension of the body. In the scene depicted on the panel, Saint Anthony takes the dead body of Saint Paul the Hermit in his arms and, as he prepares to bury him with his own hands, his soul rises to heaven.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the lives of Christian hermits became remarkably popular, a fact that stimulated iconography related to hermitism, in which the corpus of images of Saint Anthony is highlighted. The author, Pasqual Ortoneda, belonged to a long line of artists and was one of the most important painters of the second Aragonese international Gothic style.



This is a work of the exhibition that takes place in the public sphere, specifically in the broadcasts of the Local Audiovisual Network (XAL), which is coordinated by the Provincial Council of Barcelona. It involves an intervention during the news or during some other programme broadcast by the XAL, particularly on the local television of the municipality that hosts the exhibition on each of their agendas. Throughout the programme in question or during a fragment of it, Antoni Abad's work, appears in video format, superimposed onto it, but still leaving it visible.

The video presents the artist's hand measuring in palms. It is a gesture that was once very common, but with the introduction of the tape measure it has fallen into disuse. Accompanying the gesture of covering a distance, in this case an abstract one, a text appears on the screen that describes, poetically, all the distances covered by the artist on August 11, 1994. This was the day that, while in the role of artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre in Canada, he decided to abandon sculpture and begin working exclusively with video and other digital formats.

Visitor services

In order to provide resources to visitors for them to contextualise and further explore the themes and perspectives of the exhibition, “A History of the Hands” offers an educational service and related activities, a documentation space and a catalogue. The exhibition also has different accessibility services.

Educational services

The educational services of the Visual Arts Programme of the Provincial Council of Barcelona:

- * Are led by professionals specialising in art and education.
- * Are aimed at and adapted to different segments of the public: individuals, families, schools and specific groups (organisations, schools, the elderly, etc.).
- * Take accessibility into account.
- * Adopt the format of a dynamic visit, a visit with discussion, a performance visit or an experimental workshop.
- * Have as general objectives:
 - To encourage curiosity and interest in the themes proposed in the exhibition.
 - To promote active reception, participation, respect, the association of ideas, experimentation, critical thinking and creativity.
 - To encourage individual and group work.
 - To offer knowledge, contextualisation and analysis tools.
 - To encourage an autonomous approach to contemporary art and current problems (social, political, economic, scientific, etc.).
 - To share the joy of learning.

The educational project of “A History of the Hands” offers activities to:

School groups

- * “Tracing the days with the tips of your fingers”
Dynamic visit for primary school groups. Duration: 1 h 30 min
This “A History of the Hands” starts early in the morning, the moment we rub our eyes and wash our faces to welcome the new day. It accompanies us in all those gestures, actions and activities that we do every day and that necessarily involve hands, touch and physical contact with objects, people and the environment that surrounds us. Through an encounter with the art works and a series of dynamic activities, we will talk and reflect on how we communicate and play, learn and work, share and relate to others. We will explore the universe of objects, gestures, textures and sensations that arise from and with our hands. We will ask ourselves what place they occupy in the virtual world today and, from the experience of lockdown and the pandemic, we will remember and talk about what those days were like when screens became spaces for work, communication, play and entertainment.
- * “Touch the world. From the skin to the screen”
Dynamic visit for secondary school groups (1st and 2nd year of Compulsory Secondary Education). Duration: 1 h 30 min
In the space that separates the virtual world from physical reality are the hands. Through our hands we chat, tag and share. With our hands we caress, hold and give. From this intermediate space between what is seen and what is touched, we will establish a conversation between the personal experiences and the impressions and interpretations that arise from the works and the dynamics. We will investigate the forms of interaction and relationships that we establish with the world and the people around us in physical space and virtual space. From the skin to the screen, we will reflect on how the surface and the environment intervene in our way of knowing, understanding, acting, thinking, desiring or feeling. We will ask ourselves if being connected implies being in contact, and we will reflect on the experience and impact of the pandemic, when hands and touch were brought to the fore.
- * “Dissecting the body. Recognising the limits”
Visit and discussion for secondary school groups (3rd and 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education), baccalaureate and training courses. Duration: 1 h 30 min
The skin is the most intimate surface through which we perceive and feel the world. Yet as well as protecting us, it also exposes us. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability and fragility that resides in the body. Being touched became a highly conflictual action and the social limits imposed on the skin and, more specifically, on the hands, revealed the weight of authority in its most physical and corporeal form. From the skin to the hands and from the hands to the body, we will investigate and reflect on how the power relations that organise and structure our contemporary society are expressed, executed and perceived from and in the body itself and from which way we are (and they are) building and modelling ourselves socially. We will also ask ourselves about the role that technologies and digital

devices play in the control, regulation and surveillance of our own body, individually and collectively.

For family groups

- * “A handful of stories”. Dynamic visit for families with children over 5 years old (preferably). Duration: 1 h 30 min
Throughout the day we touch numerous objects, spaces, surfaces and people. Touching is part of the way we relate and interact with what surrounds us, and it is also an impulse that we often feel when we enter a museum or an exhibition room. So, we will welcome “A History of the Hands” by exercising touch, stimulating the skin, moving the hands and awakening the fingers. We will explore, experience, (re)discover and talk about everything we are able to do, say, perceive and express with our hands. Using the works and actions of the artists and a series of dynamics, we will transform the exhibition space into a place where you can imagine, talk, play, create and even invent and tell stories just with your hands and fingers.

For adults

- * “Tactile glances. Exploring the past and the present through the hands”. Guided visit and dialogue for adults (over 16 years old). Duration: 1 hour
With our hands we touch the world, we say it, do it, feel it and even transform it. Through our hands we perceive, communicate, explore, produce, create, desire and care. To explore “A History of the Hands” is to delve into the universe of tactile relationships we establish with the environment, things and people around us, through a series of works and artists who have found in the hands, body and skin a surface from which to observe, think and represent the world. The visit will follow the story of the exhibition and will centre around the discussion that arises from one’s own gaze, connecting what is seen with what is experienced. A ‘tactile glance’ at contemporary life and society, to think and imagine ourselves in a present in which the boundaries between the physical world and the virtual world are increasingly blurred, especially in the reality that emerged from the pandemic.

For groups of people with Alzheimer’s (with carers and/or family members)

- * “Inhabit the hands”. Dynamic visit. Duration: 1 hour (flexible)
Using the hands as a space of perception and awareness of what we feel and what inhabits us, we will start the visit in a dynamic way, stimulating touch to begin talking and exploring the exhibition with our hands. Textures and surfaces often function as devices for a memory that, sometimes, is not expressed in words, but through the sensations and emotions we keep on our skin. From here, we will tour the exhibition focusing especially on the works that arouse most interest and curiosity to investigate the gestures, actions and sensations that are articulated around the hands, and to share the way how they accompany us on a daily basis, in doing, feeling and caring.

Related activities

The Visual Arts Programme of the Provincial Council of Barcelona supports the organisation of specific related activities in each municipality where the itinerant exhibitions are scheduled. These activities are conceptualised and designed based on the interests, needs and potential of each municipality. The municipalities then select those which interest them the most from a range of proposals, or they suggest new ones. “A History of the Hands” offers conferences, workshops, shows, film sessions, performance activities, etc., by the curator and artists, and other professionals:

- * Guided visit of “A History of the Hands”, by Alexandra Laudo, curator of the exhibition.
- * Frottage workshop, given by Marc Larré, artist.
- * *Dit dit (Finger finger)*, a performance and dance workshop for families, by CondeGalí B.L.
- * *Tacte-intacte (Touch-untouched)*, film session and author video, by Albert Alcoz, filmmaker, theorist and film curator, and Alexandra Laudo, curator.
- * Performances:
 - *Ocells-textos-onades (Birds-texts-waves)*, by Julia Mariscal, artist.
 - *Otro modo de hacer juegos con las manos (Another way of playing games with the hands)*, curated by Anna Dot, artist, and Alba Sanmartí, actress and dance teacher.
- * Conversations:
 - “Hands, the museum, death”. With Pepe Serra, director of the MNAC, Alexandra Laudo and Caterina Almirall, independent curator.
 - “Hands, names, authorship”. With Cèsar Favà, curator of the MNAC Gothic Art Collection, Roser Cambray, curator of the MNAC Photography Department, and Alexandra Laudo.
 - Citizen activation of activity 30 of *Learning to Love You More*, a participatory art project created by Harrell Fletcher and Miranda July that was active from 2002 to 2009, the year in which it was acquired by the archive of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. As part of “A History of the Hands” exhibition, citizens are being encouraged to take part in activity 30 of *Learning to Love You More*, based on the free participation of all, incentivised by the art centres where the exhibition is being hosted.

Documentation space

Books

- 1 BACCI, Francesca and MELCHER, David (ed.): *Art and the Senses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- 2 BYNUM, W. F. and PORTER, Roy (ed.). *Medicine and the five senses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- 3 CLASSEN, Constance (ed.). *The Book of Touch*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005.
- 4 CLASSEN, Constance. *The Deepest Sense*. Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 2012.
- 5 DERRIDA, Jacques. *On Touching*. Jean-Luc Nancy. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- 6 FOCILLON, Henry. *In Praise of Hands*. New York: Parkstone Press, 2020.
- 7 HOLLER, Linda. *Erotic Morality: The Role of Touch in Moral Agency*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- 8 JOSIPOVICI, Gabriel. *Touch*. Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- 9 MAURETTE, Pablo. *The Forgotten Sense*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- 10 MORRIS, Desmond. *Postures. Body Language in Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2019.
- 11 MUNARI, Bruno. *Suplemento al dizionario italiano*. Mantua: Corraini Edizioni, 1999. + Poster.
- 13 WILSON, Frank. R. *The Hand. How its use shapes the brain*. London: Vintage, 1999.

Articles

- 1 AGAMBEN, Giorgio. "Notes on Gesture AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *Means without End - Notes on Politics*". Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. Editorial Pre-textos, 2002.
- 2 BUTLER, Judith. "Human traces on the surfaces of the world". *[ConTactos]*. New York: Hemipress, 2020.
- 3 BAU, Andrea M. "Elogio de la mano: el tacto, la mano y la piel en el discurso médico de la primera modernidad" (*In praise of the hand: touch, the hand and the skin in the medical discourse of the first modernity*). *Ingenium. Revista Electrónica de Pensamiento Moderno y Metodología en Historia de las Ideas*, 12. Madrid: Universidad complutense de Madrid, 2018.
- 4 MENDE, Doreen. "The Code of Touch: Navigating Beyond Control, or, Towards Scalability and Sociability". *e-flux Journal*, #109. New York: e-flux, 2020.
- 5 MIGUÉLEZ, Alicia. "Actitudes gestuales en la iconografía del románico peninsular hispano": *el sueño, el dolor espiritual y otras expresiones similares*". (*Gestural attitudes in the iconography of the Spanish Romanesque peninsular: sleep, spiritual pain and other similar expressions*) León: University of León, 2007.
- 6 PALAZZO, Eric. "Les cinq sens, le corps et l'espri" (The five senses, the body and the spirit. *Mirabilia: electronic journal of antiquity and middle ages*, [online], 2019, no 28, p. 306-30.

- 7 PLI-É COLLECTIVE, "Dare to embrace the bodies". Barcelona: *a-desk Spotlight*, 2020.
- 8 SHEINGORN, Pamela. "The Wise Mother: The Image of St. Anne Teaching the Virgin Mary". Chicago: The University of Chicago Press Journals. *Gesta*, Volume 32, Number 1, 1993.

Accessibility

"A History of the Hands" offers a range of accessibility resources to make it easier for everyone to visit the exhibition:

- * Texts in Braille, macro-characters and easy-to-read options.
- * Audio guide with sign language.
- * Educational services with a sign language interpreter for organised groups.
- * Activities linked to sign language interpreters for concerted groups.
- * Educational services adapted for concerted groups of people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers and/or family members.
- * Educational services adapted for groups of people with cognitive disabilities.

Biographies

Antoni Abad

(Lleida, 1956)

Antoni Abad began his career in the field of sculpture and photography, developing works and installations that dealt with aspects such as modular production, seriality, the concept of scale, space-time relations and language. After a while, Abad became interested in the language of video and video installation, an area in which he became one of the greatest international exponents.

Before long, he also began to work in the field of netart, attracted by the possibilities offered by the internet as an artistic medium. He developed a large number of community projects based on the use of the network and mobile devices, mainly with disadvantaged groups or those at risk of exclusion, such as immigrants, refugees, demobilised guerrillas, prostitutes or people with reduced mobility. Through the technological structures provided by the artist, these individuals became active participants who documented and made their testimonies public. In recent times, Abad has developed audiovisual, sound and digital artistic projects with groups with special needs, such as deaf, blind or visually impaired people.

Àgora Serveis Culturals

Àgora is a company dedicated to creating and developing educational projects, as well as organising educational and mediation activities in museums and cultural institutions. It also manages the Espai Àgora, where courses and entertaining cultural activities are put on for adults.

The Àgora team is made up of professionals in the sector (graduates in Art History, Fine Arts, Humanities, History, etc.) and its main objective is to educate through art and professionalise mediation in museums. For 21 years it has enjoyed an ongoing collaboration with public and private institutions, such as Fundació "la Caixa", Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Museu Picasso de Barcelona, Fundació Vila Casas or the Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família, among others. www.agoraserveis.com

Isabel Banal

(Castellfollit de la Roca, 1963; she lives

between Barcelona and Abella de la Conca) Isabel Banal's artistic practice is infused by the Catalan landscape of La Garrotxa, where she grew up. The relationship with nature, rurality and the tradition of landscape painting from the Escola d'Olot have influenced her work, in which she deals with aspects linked to the relationship between the natural world and the urban, nature and artifice. In her work she often combines natural elements and everyday objects, she makes recurring use of the colour white, allowing her to project various and even opposite meanings, such as the idea of beginning or limit, of absence or totality, and of silence or revelation.

Some of her works are open projects in a constant process of creation, series with specific themes that develop as a collection and that the artist grows with sporadic or regular contributions, arising from fortuitous encounters or specific gestures and processes linked to everyday elements and the domestic environment. Banal understands art and artistic practice as an activity integrated into the smallness and grandeur of daily life, common objects and day-to-day living.

Isabel Barrios Ibars

(Lleida, 1991)

Isabel Barrios' art unfolds mainly through video, photography, literature and performance. Barrios combines her artistic career with her work as a nurse, two disciplines that she often hybridises by developing artistic projects that address themes related to the body and its representation in the context of medicine, therapeutic processes and the ethical and political dimension of curing. In recent years, after leaving the city and returning to the rural world, the artist has developed new lines of work that focus on the landscape, sustainability, ecology and decline, and also on issues such as intimacy, everyday life and memory. Word and text, which she works through the essay, poetic prose or speaking, are also of crucial importance in her work.

Colita

(Barcelona, 1940)

Self-taught, Colita is one of the most prominent photographers on the Spanish scene, especially in the field of portraiture and photojournalism. During the democratic transition in Spain, she collaborated as a photojournalist with different media of progressive ideology, always working from a position that she herself defines as feminist, humanist and left-wing. Colita understands photography as a document of memory and approaches it with a pragmatic intention. Her work comes from a desire to generate images that communicate facts and situations efficiently. She was artistic director of the magazine *Vindicación feminista*, which was created following the celebration of the I Jornades Catalanes de la Dona (1st Catalan Women's Day), which took place in Barcelona in May 1976, and which was key in the reactivation of the feminist movement after the dictatorship. Colita was part of the Gauche Divine, a group of prominent figures of the Barcelona intellectual and artistic scene who, during the late Franco regime, adopted an irreverent attitude towards customs and traditional forms, and who would become benchmarks of the counterculture.

Mirari Echávarri López

(Iruña, 1988)

Mirari Echávarri's work is articulated mainly through video and photography, and it shows a special interest in storytelling and the relationship between text and image. Her work, with an important narrative and essayistic component, are permeated by feminist thinking and often start from personal reflections and autobiographical experiences that the artist interweaves with theoretical references. These narrative elements are combined with filming, photographs and archival images to give rise to hybrid audiovisual accounts, which could be placed between the autobiographical portrait and the video essay.

Raquel Frieria

(Tarragona, 1978; lives in Barcelona)

Raquel Frieria is an artist and economist, and through her work she takes a critical approach to certain politico-economic problems of notable social impact, such as immigration, job insecurity or the acceleration of production and consumption rates within the framework of late capitalism. From a feminist perspective, and with a strong interest in gender studies, Frieria analyses how these situations especially affect women and other groups which are socially discriminated against by the hegemony of the patriarchal system.

Her works are formalised as videos, publications, installations and performances, and they are often the result of a collective and collaborative work process.

Camille Henrot

(Paris, 1978; lives in New York)

Camille Henrot's work reflects a very broad spectrum of interests and is formalised through a wide variety of media including drawing, sculpture, video, film, installation and painting. The artist explores questions of an anthropological, historical and ethnological nature, and is interested in ideology, religion, psychology and psychoanalysis, as well as in orality, mythology and literary fiction. Henrot approaches these classic themes to relate them to the anxieties, concerns and questions that define our contemporaneity, such as globalisation, telecommunications, internet culture, bureaucracy, hypervisuality or the acceleration of the rhythms of life. This rich diversity of interests and the multiplicity of disciplines with which she works are, in reality, a starting point for reflecting on the meaning of existence and on what it means to be an individual in a global world; and to approach deeply transcendent and universal issues, such as vulnerability, faith, knowledge, love, death and desire.

Fermin Jiménez Landa

(Pamplona, 1979; lives in Valencia)

Jiménez Landa's takes routine, norms and conventions and projects onto them the possibility of a happiness linked to the playful, unproductive and poetic gesture. His work is developed within the framework of what is familiar, ordinary and close, to alter its balance and functioning through small gestures and apparently absurd interventions that, nevertheless, manage to highlight all the disruptive and poetic potential that is present in our everyday life. His actions, inheritors of Dadaism, the *flâneur* attitude and situationism, and generally carried out in the public space, use these experiences to generate artistic works that are formalised through various supports and media, such as video, installations, photographic series, drawings or the artist's book.

Alexandra Laudo

(Barcelona, 1978)

In her curatorial projects she has worked on issues related to narration, the story and the spaces of intersection between the visual arts and literature; the social construction of time and the experience of temporality; the history of the gaze, oculo-centrism and the relationships between technology and ways of seeing and looking; the use of darkness, opacity and absence in artistic practice; and, more recently, the 24/7 productivity paradigm in relation to the consumption of caffeine and other stimulants, new technologies, and sleep and rest time.

In recent years, she has explored the possibility of introducing orality, performativity and narrative into curatorial practice, through hybrid curatorial projects, such as performative conferences or curatorial proposals situated between literary essay, criticism and the curator. As part of this research, she developed the performative conferences "An intellectual history of the clock" – premiered at Malongen Nordiska Konstförbundet (Stockholm) and presented in several European art centres and festivals – and "How to observe a nocturnal sky" – produced by the Collective art centre

(Edinburgh), where it premiered. It was later presented at the Centre d'Art Fabra i Coats (Barcelona), as part of the Loop Festival, and now at the Teatre Lliure, within the framework of the Katharsis series. In this same line of work and also in the audiovisual field, we should mention the video essays *All the dark screens* (2019) and *There is no way* (2020), co-directed by Albert Alcoz.

Apart from these performative conferences, her recent curatorial works include "Antibiografia" (Centre d'Art Maristany, Sant Cugat del Vallès), the co-curation of the 12th Leandre Cristòfol Biennial (La Panera, Lleida), the project of expanded curatorial writing "Entre les coses conegudes i les desconegudes" (MAC, Mataró), the collective research and curatorial project "Quasi Veu" (Department of Culture and Network of Visual Arts Centres of Catalonia); the exhibition "Ella, l'ull, el dit, la mà" (ADN Galeria, Barcelona Gallery Weekend); the artistic action FOC, co-created with Tanit Plana and Moon Ribas (MAC, Mataró); the curatorial-literary action "Repenjar-se en un raig de sol oblic", developed on the p4stura.net platform in the framework of Art Nou; the exhibition "Una certa foscor" (CaixaForum); the exhibition series "The possibility of an island" (Espai 13, Fundació Joan Miró), or the 2017-2018 editions of the programme of artistic interventions in public spaces "Compositions", co-curated with Glòria Picazo (Barcelona Gallery Weekend), among other curatorial projects.

She has received various awards and grants for her curatorial and research work, such as the Terrassa Comissariat award, the Barcelona Producció award for Curatorship, the Marco Magnani Giovanna Critica award and the GAC award for Curatorship. She has edited and published some art books and exhibition catalogues, and has written numerous texts for art publications, essay books and specialised press. She has a degree in Humanities and a post-graduate degree in Cultural Management from Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) and has also completed a master's degree in Visual Arts and Museology at New York University.

During the 2015-2016 academic year she was one of the eight participants in CuratorLab, an international curatorial research programme at Konstfack (Stockholm).

Joan Morey

(Sant Llorenç des Cardassar, 1972; lives in Barcelona)

In his work, Joan Morey makes use of a great diversity of media, such as video, graphic work, installation, textile art and sound work, but performance is indisputably the discipline that runs through his entire practice. Through performative language, the artist created events, theatrical acts and mise-en-scènes in which the performers and the public are subjected to a rigid system of rules, protocols and instructions. With this approach, Morey explores the dynamics of power, oppression and servitude that we establish and accept in our relationships with others, both in the public sphere, within the socio-political structures that govern us, and in the realm of private life and affective relationships. His work also explores themes such as illness, sexuality, authority and desire, and we find references to the imaginary and aesthetics of religion, BDSM practices, medicine and fashion, as well such as the influence of disciplines such as theatre, cinema and philosophy, especially authors such as Antonin Artaud, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Antoni Muntadas

(Barcelona, 1942; lives between Barcelona and New York)

In his artistic practice, Antoni Muntadas is interested in the production and circulation of information and knowledge, and in the political, ideological and economic forces and structures that affect these processes. This has led him to focus much of his work on the analysis of advertising and the media (from newspapers and television to the internet), but also on the critical study of disciplines such as architecture and urban planning or institutions that generate and distribute knowledge, such as universities or museums.

Muntadas uses strategies of recycling and appropriating existing images, texts and other informative elements, which it transforms and gives new meanings to put them back into circulation. His work unfolds through a great diversity of media and artistic formats, such as video, video installation, photography or interventions in the public sphere. The editions – of which *Gestures* (2003) and *Punctuations* (2017) are examples – are also very important in his body of work.

Oficina De Disseny

The graphic work that Oficina de Disseny (ODD) has designed for “A History of the Hands” is based on an investigation into the history of serial writing and its relationship with the evolution of typography. It focuses deeply on the period marked by the appearance of typewriters, situated between two great moments of this evolution, the development of industrial printing and the digitisation processes that took place during the second half of the 20th century, with the emergence of computing.

The graphic communication work for the exhibition unfolds from combinatory relationships between a selection of images of works of art belonging to different periods and styles, and a selection of three typefaces that are relevant in the history of serial writing. It centres on Laurenz Brunner’s Bradford, based on a typeface from 1884; the Römische Antiqua, which tried to imitate calligraphic writing, and which was later versioned as a monospaced typeface for typewriters; James Goggin’s Courier Sans, based on IBM’s 1955 Courier, designed especially for typewriters; and Septima by Radim Pesko, from 2008, which is inspired by the monospaced typefaces of typewriters and the design of the first typefaces for writing in computer code, which sought, above all, to be easily identifiable and very readable.

Levi Orta

(Havana, 1984; lives in Vidreres)

While resorting to irony, parody, imitation or anecdote, and making use of artistic methodologies such as appropriation, copying or archival practice, Levi Orta highlights situations and aspects of the behaviour and life of politicians and the ruling classes that are morally shocking, even scandalous and reprehensible, but which, on the other hand, have not transcended public opinion too much or had a prominent social repercussion. From a deeply critical position, but apparently neutral in form, Orta brings forth this information to denounce, on the one hand, the incompetence and moral laxity that is often linked to the exercise of power, and another, the complacency and social conformity prevalent in the face of the behaviour of those who govern us.

María Sánchez

(La Horcajada, 1977; lives in Madrid)

In her artistic work, María Sánchez seeks to use the minimum resources and produce the smallest possible number of objects. Hers is a dematerialised practice, based on the development of small and subtle actions, but which have a high disruptive component and a significant emotional charge. In these actions, there is a desire to get closer to strangers, to those anonymous people with whom we momentarily live in public spaces and with whom we maintain a cordial distance, determined by tacitly established codes of social conduct. This approach by the artist puts tension on the conventions that establish the limits between the affectivity of private life and the distant neutrality of public life and make possible situations in which the potentiality of an intimacy and a socially inappropriate emotional intensity. The actions do not respond so much to the intention to inconvenience strangers as to the need to recognise the vulnerability of oneself and others, and also to the desire and attempt to understand the nature and boundaries existing between I and we.

The touring calendar

1. Granollers

Museu de Granollers
From March 25 until May 15, 2022

2. Sabadell

Museu d'Art de Sabadell
From May 26 until July 3, 2022

3. Mollet del Vallès

Museu Abelló
From September 16 until November 6, 2022

4. Vilanova i la Geltrú

Centre d'Art La Sala
From November 18, 2022, until January 8, 2023

5. Vilafranca del Penedès

Sala dels Trinitaris
From January 20 until March 12, 2023

6. Manresa

Centre Cultural el Casino
From March 24 until May 21, 2023

7. Vic

Museu de l'Art de la Pell i ACVic
From June 3 until August 27, 2023

8. Martorell

Muxart Espai d'Art i Creació Contemporanis
From September 8 until October 29, 2023

9. Mataró

Ca l'Arenas centre d'art. Museu de Mataró i MAC La Presó
From November 11, 2023, until January 7, 2024

10. Cerdanyola del Vallès

Museu d'Art Cerdanyola
From January 19, until March 10, 2024

Credits

"A History of the Hands" is an itinerant exhibition (2022-24) curated by Alexandra Laudo and organised by the Visual Arts Programme of the Provincial Council of Barcelona, with the collaboration of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) and the municipalities that host it.

Produced by:

Visual Arts Programme of the Artistic Diffusion Office of the Culture Area of the Provincial Council of Barcelona

Tour:

Visual Arts Programme of the Artistic Diffusion Office of the Culture Area of the Provincial Council of Barcelona and participating City Councils: Cerdanyola del Vallès, Granollers, Manresa, Martorell, Mataró, Mollet del Vallès, Sabadell, Terrassa, Vilafranca del Penedès and Vilanova i la Geltrú

Curator: Alexandra Laudo

Artists: Antoni Abad, Isabel Banal, Isabel Barios, Damià Campeny, Colita, Mirari Echávarri, Raquel Frieria, Camille Henrot, Fermín Jiménez Landa, Claudi Lorenzale, Master of Cinctorres, Joan Morey, Antoni Muntadas, Levi Orta, Pasqual Ortoneda, María Sánchez, anonymous works from the 13th, 15th, 16th and 18th centuries and a selection of 20th century coins from the Numismatic Cabinet of Catalonia

Design and implementation of the educational service:

Àgora Serveis Culturals

Specific related activities for each municipality:

Curators and other professionals

Coordination and production of the edition:

Sub-directorate of Corporate Image and Institutional Promotion of the Provincial Council of Barcelona

Graphic design: Oficina de disseny

Adaptation of the exhibition for each exhibition centre:

Croquis, Alexandra Laudo and Visual Arts Programme of the Office of Artistic Diffusion of the Provincial Council of Barcelona

Correspondence: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC)

Assembly and exhibition elements: Muntatges Mòbils, SL

Displays: Tempo Metal, SL

Transport and packaging: Feltrero División Arte, SL

Insurance:

Confide corredoria de Seguros y Reaseguros, SA

Braille and macro characters: ONCE

Easy-to-read edition:

Easy-to-read Association

Sign language:

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www.diba.cat/oda/historiadelesmans
#HistòriaDeLesMans

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Unsigned texts from the chapters "Thematic areas and work" and "Biographies": Alexandra Laudo
The rest: Visual Arts Programme of the Provincial Council of Barcelona



**Diputació
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