

# Josep Grau-Garriga

## Dialogue with light

Exhibition from 28 November 2022  
to 11 September 2023



Project for the environment created at the Teatre Pierre Fresnay, Ermont, 1979 [detail], [ca. 1979]. Grau-Garriga Family. © Grau-Garriga Family. Foto: Sílvia Poch

Which artistic practices were marginalised by the traditional historiography of contemporary art? And, despite this, what is their contribution to the development of certain artistic and cultural manifestations, past and present?

*Josep Grau-Garriga: Dialogue with Light* is the first in a series of research and exhibition projects carried out by the Museum around practices and practitioners whose relevance on the local and international scene has not always been sufficiently recognised. The project aims to highlight some of these absences both in the history of art and in its formulation through art collections, a decisive factor in determining the characteristics that define periods, themes and specific trends, to the detriment of other narratives and artists that are left outside those limits.

One of these trajectories is the regeneration of textiles in art and in pedagogy conducted by Josep Grau-Garriga (Sant Cugat del Vallès, 1929 – Angers, 2011), a key artist in this medium in the international arena throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

A fundamental exponent of the Catalan School of Tapestry from the 1960s, Grau-Garriga began to explore the expressive possibilities of the medium with work that broke away from the conceptual and spatial limits of what, in the West, was considered a minor art. Drawing on the knowledge acquired from pioneers such as Jean Lurçat, who had introduced a renewal of tapestry influenced by the Gothic era, and seeking inspiration from the material and gestural Informalism of artists such as Jean Dubuffet, Grau-Garriga envisaged a wide range of possibilities for connecting textiles, physically and emotionally, with the viewer. As he himself explained:

‘[...] I believe that fabric, fibre, is a very important means of communication [...]. Bear in mind that fabric is the external element that has the most contact with our body. It is our second skin. Everyone is familiar with it by touch, by sight. I think we should take advantage of this. I work and constantly look for new solutions, textures, materials and shapes, and I try to say things through textiles.’<sup>1</sup>

To this exploration of the expressiveness and materiality of textiles – which, in a Pop-like experiment, even led him to employ other materials and objects from daily life, such as his relatives’ clothes, newspapers, wire and burlap sacks – the artist added a projection into three-dimensionality, to the point of conquering the entirety of the exhibiting space. In the 1970s, the need to explore communicative aspects that would inexorably link the aesthetics of textiles to

<sup>1</sup>Cadena, J. M.: ‘Grau Garriga , el “tapís” català’ *Diario de Barcelona*, 25 January 1976, p. 26.

life, led him to create his so-called 'environments': site-specific structures of an immersive nature in which trans-disciplinary and large-format works were taken beyond the limits imposed on traditional textile art.

*Josep Grau-Garriga: Dialogue with Light* focuses on these types of ephemeral creations that are close to happenings and which the artist made in all kinds of contexts, from natural environments and urban spaces to historic buildings and exhibition galleries. Despite their intimate feel, the installations often had a historical charge and invariably displayed a clear critical component regarding environmental preservation and the use of local, natural resources. The notion of 'artwork' was completely diluted to give rise to a scenario, an 'environment' — as he himself defined them — in which new relational forms emerged between the tapestry, the space and the public, sometimes his own students. Threads, fibres and other materials spread throughout the space, establishing unexpected dialogues with the environment or the architecture they inhabited, and plunging the viewer into a reality that seemed transformative and new.

*Diàleg de llum* (Dialogue with Light, 1986–88), the work now presented in the Museum, is a variable installation that Grau-Garriga adapted and incorporated into different architectural spaces, such as the main stairwell of the Palau Robert of Barcelona where the piece was first exhibited in its entirety in 1988.

For Grau-Garriga, the interaction that each viewer or each participant in one of his workshops established with his 'environments' contributed to their total and changing significance. Through this gesture, he vindicated the critical capacities of each unique individual, highlighting how the sum of each of these responses generated ever greater creativity. This idea formed the basis of his pedagogical thinking, which was often developed through workshops aimed at both specific groups and the general public, in which the 'environments' were ultimately created as a result of a collective effort and poetics.

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# EXHIBITION

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## Preventive Conservation and Restoration

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Alba Clavell

Montse Comas

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## Graphic Design

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## Exhibition Installation

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España, S.A.

## Cleaning

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## Maintenance

ISS

## Directors of audience

Carme Espinosa

Magma Cultura

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A research project by **Núria Montclús** and **Esther Grau**, in collaboration with **Àlex Castro** and **Alba Clavell**.

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### Let's talk about...

**Josep Grau-Garriga.**

***The Territory of Emotions***

Coversations

**Fri 2/12** 7 p.m.

With **Joël Andrianomearisoa**  
and **Esther Grau**

Free activity. Advanced booking and more information at **macba.cat**.

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### Opening hours

Mondays, Wednesdays,  
Thursdays and Fridays,  
11 am to 7.30 pm  
(from 25 June to 24  
September, 10 am to 8 pm)  
Tuesdays, except public  
holidays, closed  
Sundays and public holidays,  
10 am to 3 pm

Saturdays, from 4 to 8 pm, free admission thanks to Uniqlo.

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