

## On entering

The weather is hot and dry. The atmosphere is electrically charged. There is a hand beneath the table holding the grass. A dark figure with blazing eyes vanishes through my body. I have verified this three times. Groups of figures have entered through the window, they chill the air terribly. On the table there is a violin, a flute and a concertina. I have the mental sensation of complete happiness.

November 1944

Joan Brossa.

The mental feeling  
of complete happiness

Joan Brossa was born on January 19, 1919, at Wagner Street in Barcelona. He considered himself, above all, ‘always a poet’. He devoted himself to his age, and worked equally on literary, visual, scenic and object poetry, exploring the limits of language and putting all codes at the service of communication. In the context of Franco’s regime suffocating oppression, Brossa found his way out to freedom in art and literature, not only breaking the limits of traditional codes, but bringing his work, and consequently, the reader, towards a confrontation with reality through the absurd or implausible. In his poems, nothing is what it seems or what is said, and we are always faced with the possibility of misinterpretation. As much as for aesthetic, conceptual and social reasons, Brossa positioned himself as a bridge between avant-garde movements. He established not only personal, but also artistic links with the key figures of the Catalan avant-garde before the Civil War and became a main character for young artists of postmodernism. A rebellious, provocative poet with a sharp sense of irony, Brossa explored the power of words to designate or name reality. And therefore, to transform it... or, at least, to create the illusion of doing so.



Curator:  
Anna Llopis

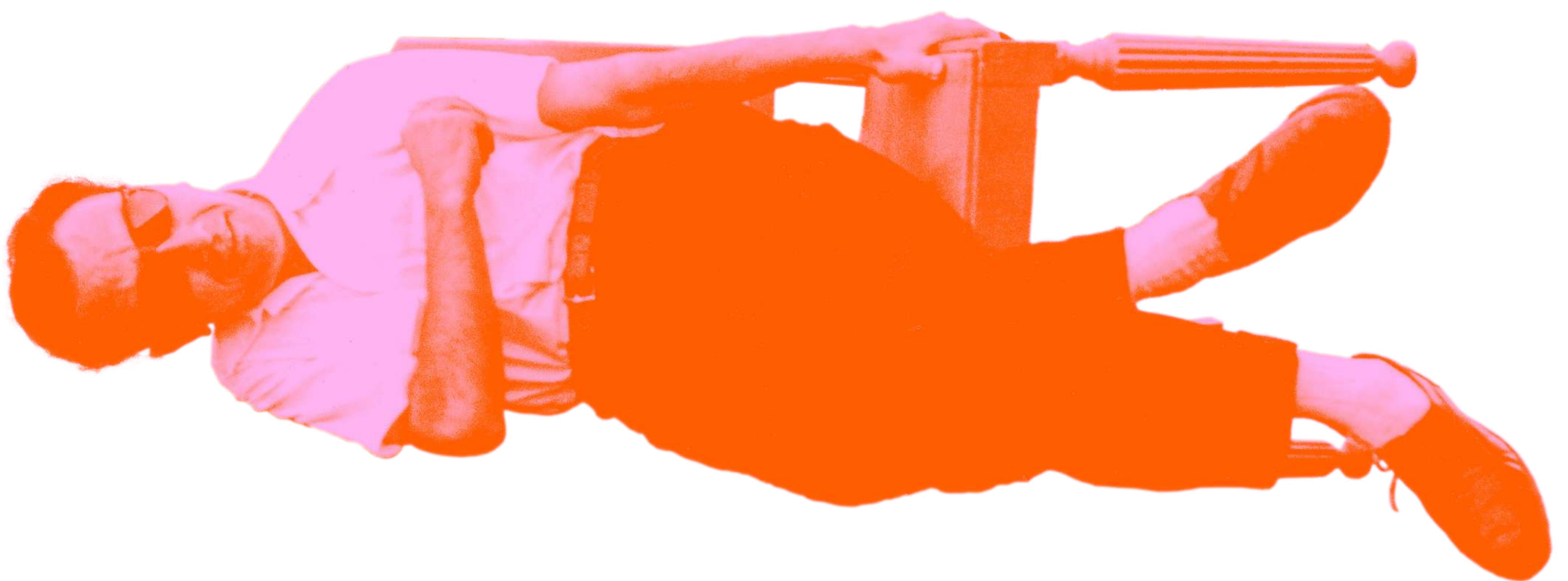
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Fundació Joan Brossa

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Rhapsodists:  
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Acknowledgements:  
Vicenç Altaió, Arxiu Històric de l'Institut del Cinema Català, Arxiu Lliure del Teatre Lliure, Arxiu Municipal de Girona, Ivan Benet, Biblioteca de Catalunya, Glòria Bordons, Jordi Bosch, CCCB. Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Colita Fotografia, Filmoteca de Catalunya, Fundació J.V. Foix, Galeria Joan Prats, Galeria Miguel Marcos, Manuel Guerrero, Emmanuel Guigon, Teresa Lozano, Joan M. Minguet, MACBA. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Pere Portabella – Films 59, Cacu Prat, QS Audiovisual Heritage Lab, Revista Serra d'Or, Teatre Lliure, Teatre Romea, Tinta Invisible, Universitat de Barcelona, Mercè Vila Rigat and Armand Villén.





# The tenth winter

I, Joan Brossa, man, old woman, plant, beetle, fire flame, air and soil, testify that I have seen how the day changes into truly magical night. An old king within me welcomes you. If I say there is no need to describe exile in an old town from ancient times, on the contrary, I remind you that my pace was still and my flight swift.

## Poetry

Brossa's first literary piece would come into being during the Spanish Civil War at the Republican Front of Lleida, after being involved in a skirmish. A year later, upon finishing his military service in Salamanca, he returned to Barcelona. Here, influenced by reading Freud, he began to carry out a series of literary exercises in which he experimented with the techniques of psychic automatism. Puzzled by these free and unconnected verses, his friend and painter Manuel Viusà, whom Brossa knew through Enric Tormo, advised him to show them to the avant-garde poet J. V. Foix, "the only person who could guide him". Foix assured him that this was authentic avant-garde poetry, but advised him not to neglect the form. Following Foix's advice, Brossa began composing sonnets, a type of classic verse that allowed him the synthesis of abstraction and reality that he intended to create. Brossa always admired and defended Foix's contemporaneity and he thought he was to literature what Miró was to art.

# Dream

In 1990 Brossa opened the exhibition catalogue *109 llibres amb Joan Miró* ('109 books with Joan Miró'), which took place at Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, stating that "Joan Miró truly was, and is, the poet's painter". This was evident in the explosion of art and poetry shown in the books that Miró created in collaboration with his poet pals, such as Joan Brossa, with whom he created *Cop de poma* (1962) and *Oda a Joan Miró* (1973), among others. Brossa and Miró shared affinities, admiration and respect for each other from the very moment the art promoter Joan Prats introduced them in 1941. Brossa's friendship with Prats was a means of enrichment for his young self, for he was able to discover the main figures of the avant-garde plastic art movement through the monographs of artists he kept in his personal library, such as Klee, Picasso, Rousseau le Douanier, Ernst... and Miró. Brossa profess admiration for the latter, whom he considered the greatest exponent



of psychic automatism. And as he used his brushes as a means to revolt, Brossa became himself an activist in the poetic revolt under his influence.

## Fascination

Since he was a child, Joan Brossa had a great fascination for the world of magic and illusionism, as related to the world of transformism. He was attracted to this art for its element of surprise and its unusual nature. As in this type of spectacle, Brossa presumed for his poetic act an active spectator who was intelligent enough to allow himself to be transported to strange or incomprehensible situations. The range of references in this field was wide and rich: performers like Fu Manchú, Fregolino, Li-Chang and Hausson, or shops like El Rei de la Màgia at Princesa Street. A special mention should be added for the drag queen Leopoldo Fregoli, for whom the poet always felt an “ancestral attraction” and around

whom he built an entire mythology. Although Brossa never saw Fregoli's shows live, these were based on speed, rhythm and imagination, which brought him closer to the first cinematographic contributions of the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès, which Brossa, ever the cinephile, advocated as the foundation of cinema.



Joan Brossa

*L'art pot morir. Homenatge a Miró*

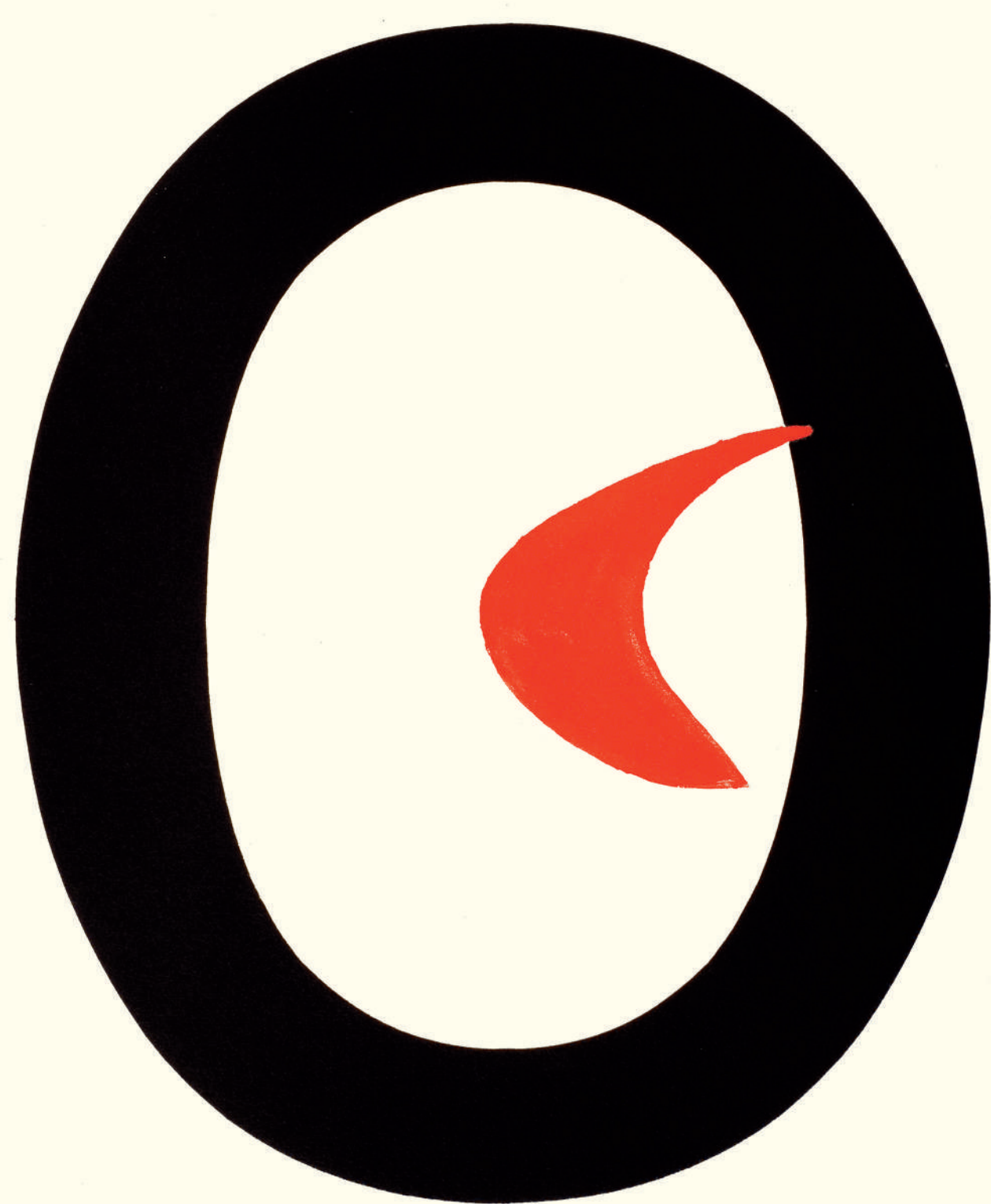
*(Art Could Die. Homage to Miró)*

Exhibition catalogue prologue for *109 Books with Joan Miró*

Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, 1989

I, Joan Brossa, man, old woman, plant,  
beetle, fire flame, air and soil





Joan Brossa

*Joan Miró, from the book Three Joans: Homage to Joan Prats*  
Barcelona, Polígrafa, 1978

I, Joan Brossa, man, old woman, plant,  
beetle, fire flame, air and soil



HC 5/8

Brossa

Joan Brossa

*Untitled*, 1970

Serigraph on paper

50 x 38 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

I, Joan Brossa, man, old woman, plant,  
beetle, fire flame, air and soil





Mireu fixament Frègoli  
i si després dirigiu la vista al sostre  
l'hi veureu.

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Joan Brossa

*Rainbow* (manuscript)

In: *Petit festival* or *Little festival*, 1965

From the compilation *Rua de llibres* or *Books Caravan*  
(1964–1970)

MACBA Collection. Centre d'Estudis i Documentació.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit

© Fundació Joan Brossa, VEGAP, Barcelona

I, Joan Brossa, man, old woman, plant,  
beetle, fire flame, air and soil



**In front...**

**In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs. I come  
after, patiently threading a fabric in the  
background by means of a needle. Behind,  
there is a man, dagger in hand, expressing  
his perverse instincts. Above, the branches  
of an oak; below, the realm of the snakes.**

## Wakefulness

Like the surrealists, Brossa understood poetry as an inner awakening that had to be expressed with total freedom. However, as surrealism advanced towards neosurrealism, he considered psychological techniques of introspection based on Freudian or Jungian methods just as a vehicle and not as a goal in themselves. Following this, he carried out a large number of literary and artistic exercises in the forties, experimenting with different creative codes and techniques. In these texts, he expressed himself through a kind of poetic prose that he called “hypnagogic texts”, in which the elements of reality are transformed and become unusual in the eyes of the reader. On the other hand, the use of the first person incorporated dialogue, which brought it closer to theatrical text and can be seen in works such as “Pedrís Gaudí”, included in *Vivàrium* (1944–1971): “To write well — it begins — it is necessary to have the body in a position which is perpendicular to the seat...”. From this moment on emerge the first

“experimental poems”, which already features the calligram, the semantic play with language and the incorporation of the object.

## Shadow

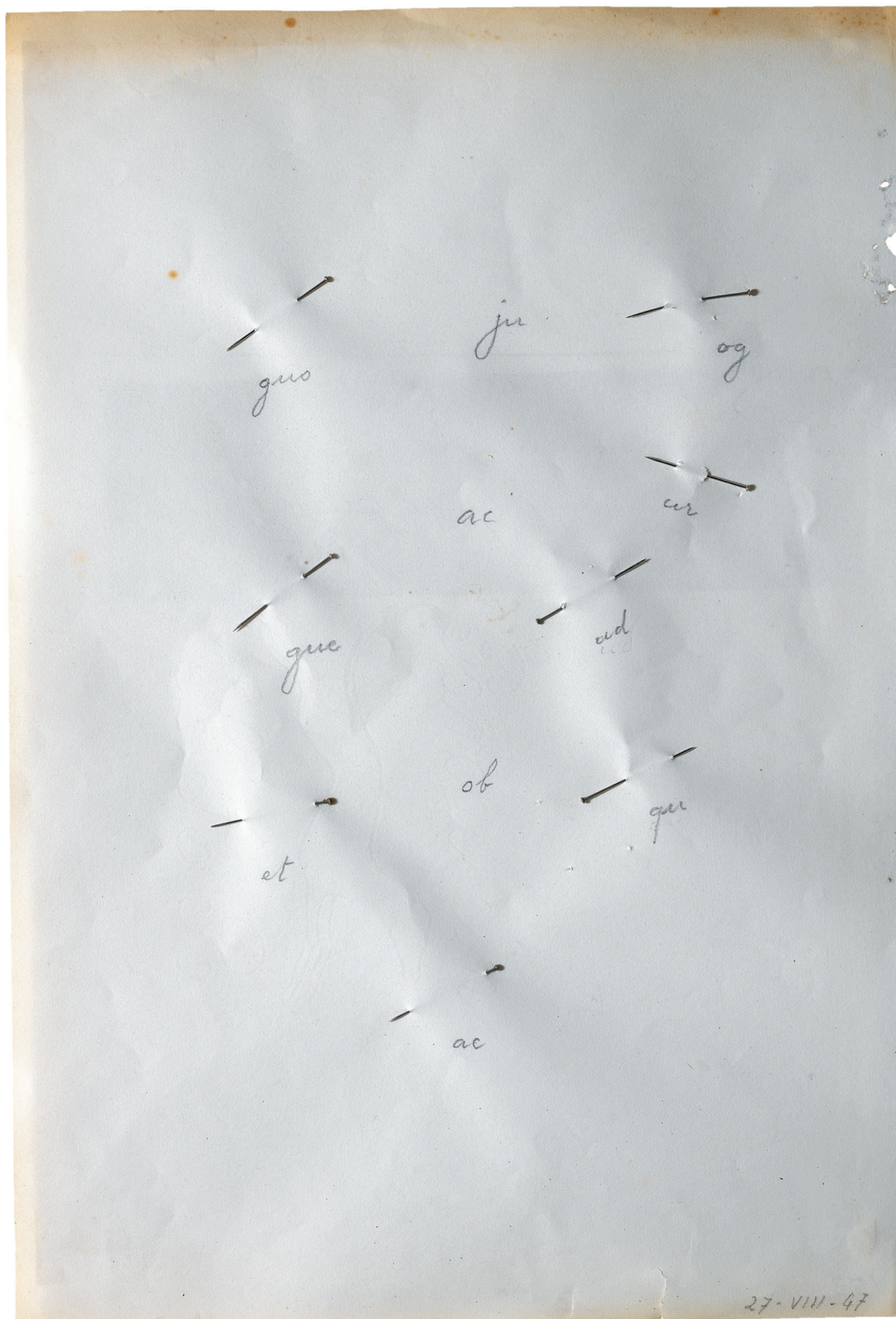
In 1946 Joan Brossa, Arnau Puig and Joan Ponç published the first and only issue of *Algol* magazine with the collaboration of Enric Tormo. Although technical and distribution difficulties prevented its continuity, it laid the foundation of the artistic avant-garde group Dau al Set. Two years later they were joined by Modest Cuixart, Antoni Tàpies and Joan-Josep Tharrats, and in September 1948 the first issue of the group’s magazine was published. *Dau al Set* was issued until 1956, although Brossa only validated its first two years. The magazine mixed the influences of the Catalan avant-garde prior to the Spanish Civil War -Foix, Dalí and Miró-, but also Klee and Ernst, along with Dada, existentialism, the poetics of the absurd and some kind of magical tradition. Likewise,

In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs



there are obvious strong ties with the ADLAN group (Amics de l'Art Nou, or Friends of New Art). It is not possible to establish the exact moment of dissolution of the group, which occurred before 1956, but from its very beginning decisive differences were established between those close to Miró — Brossa, Cuixart and Tàpies — and the supporters of Dalí — Ponç, Puig and Tharrats —. In 1949, Juan-Eduardo Cirlot joined the group, and that same year the first exhibition of the three visual artists of the group took place. In 1951 the group's only collective exhibition was held at Sala Caralt in Barcelona, where Joan Brossa presented his first object poem (*Bark*, from 1943).





Joan Brossa

27-8-1947

Pencil and needles on paper

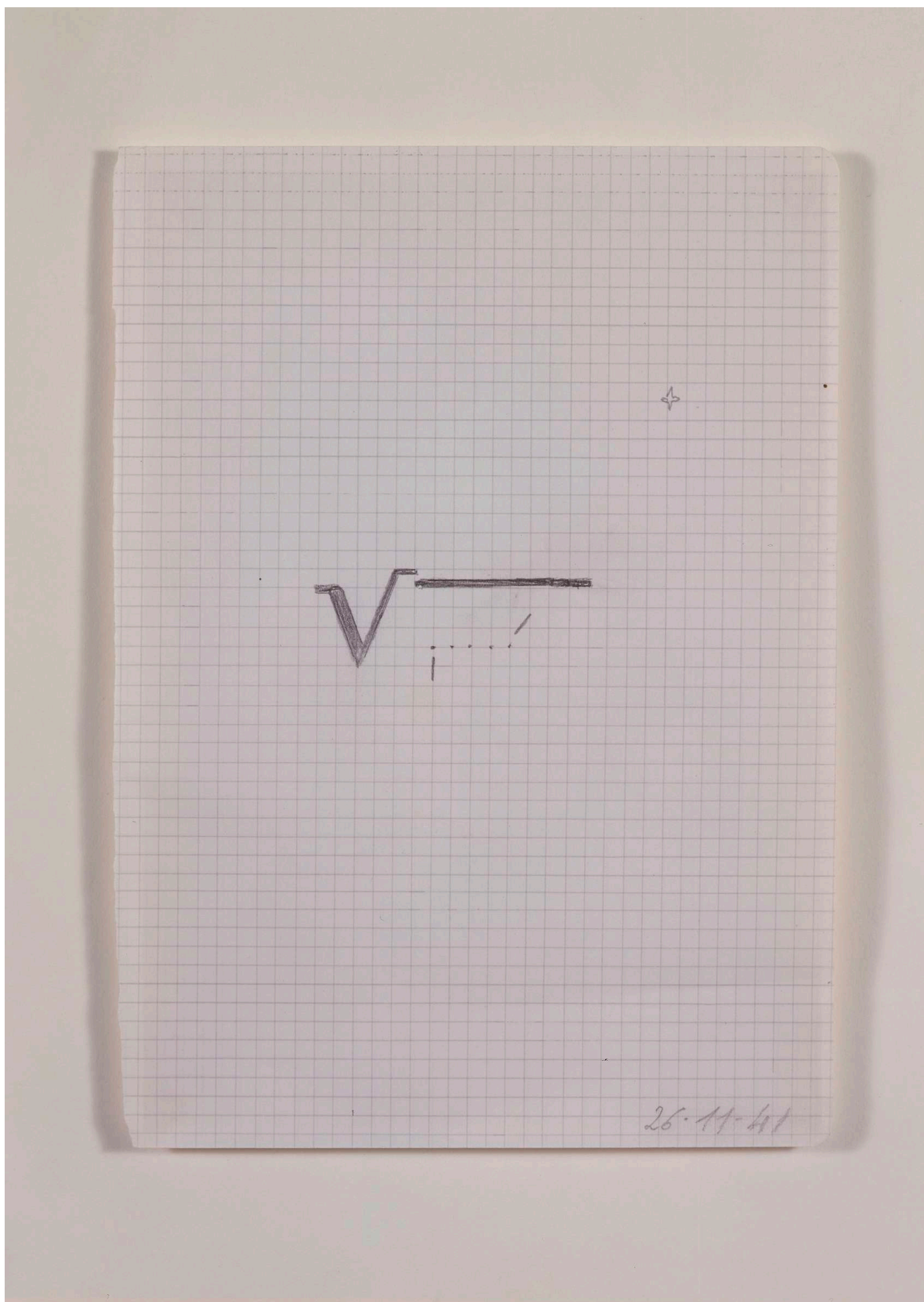
35 x 24,5 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs





Joan Brossa

*Experimental poem*, 1941

Pencil on paper

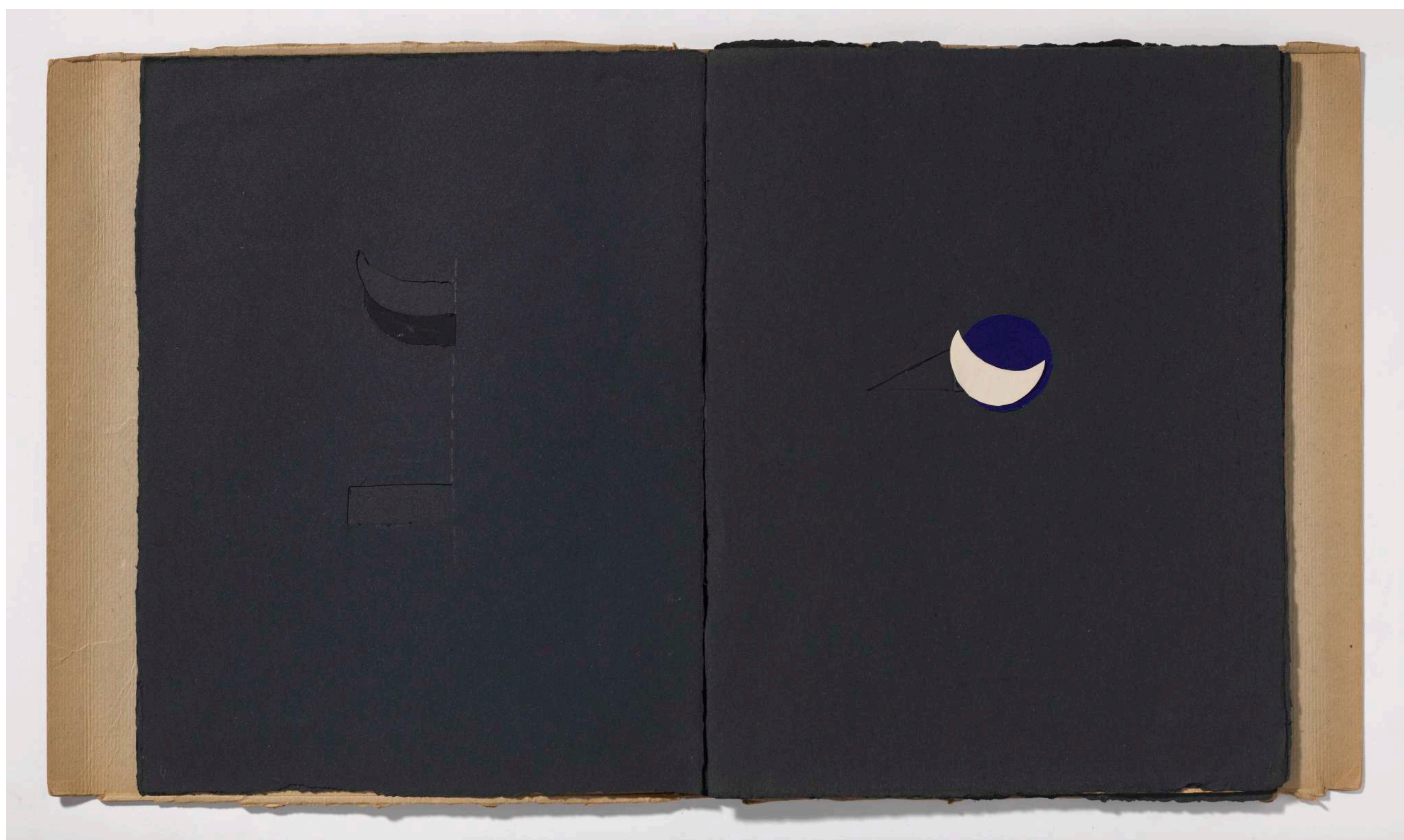
21,2 x 15,4 cm

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In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs





Joan Brossa

*The Sleepiness of the Rooster*, 1965

Collage and pencil handwriting on paper

33 x 26 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

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In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs





Tots els indígenes duen llur safata d'una manera sospitosa. No vull presenciar més actes de subhasta amb disfressa de vell. Mai no podré oblidar l'ocell que em posaves a les mans quan jo, infeliç, t'aplicava receptacles secrets a la cama de fusta.

Abans de tancar-te a l'armari, m'inclino, recordes? per donar-te un reptil amb l'emoció que produeix tot allò antic i indesxifrable, i davant la insistència amb què crido el meu criat perquè es posi ràpidament al cap de tot, promets no tornar a l'eure i tirar la copa al mar.

La nit era tempestuosa. Em besares d'una manera que prengué foc a la catifa. Un ganivet llengat amb gran destresa dividí el cel en quatre parts.



Abraça'm. Quan t'allunyes de mi es tornen negres els mobles de l'apartament. Quan t'apropes, el miracle de la set! A la teva manera de somriure en acabar-se l'hivern, hi corre un insecte. No puc més; dona'm normes per a l'adquisició d'un bon piano. No vulguis dissimular. Estem en ple camp.



Què tens a la mà? La teva ironia molesta el meu criat de manera que sempre he de disculpar-te, dient-li amb to natural: —“Senyores... Senyors...” — i recordant-li que el truc de la guillotina es fa amb dos caps.

Era un dia d'estiu d'aquells que si n'hi haguessin gaires no existiria la ruleta. Un drap negre ensangonava la taula. Les cortines que cobrien la porta eren past dels moluscos. Tota sola arribares pel balcó, mentre jo llegia el correu amb calma.

La fiamarada dels teus ulls em privà de rumiar. Ara comprenc que el rellotge ho feia tot. Per què vares dir que no podies viure sense mi, si en dir-te jo a cau d'orella que eres bonica fins a la perfecció, vas avisar la policia?

- 12 -

Però oblidem tot allò. M'encisa el perill. Oblidem-ho en un dispar certer. Vina: passegem-nos pel jardí; la lluna és al ple i sota el salze podrem desenterrar els bastons i el rodet del meu diàbolo.

Va passar algun temps. Està escrit en el Llibre de Cleopatra: “PERQUÈ UNA DONA ESTIGUI CONTENTA DEL SEU AMANT COM ELLA DESITJA. Pren una granota verda i talla-li el cap i les potes el primer dia de la lluna nova. Posa els trossos amb oli de saüc. Treu-los al cap de set dies, al punt de mitjanit; tantost d'haver-los reduït a pols, els deixes en una tassa de vidre vint-i-un dies per tal que rebin la influència dels astres. El dia vint-i-unè, precisament el tercer de la següent lluna, els posaràs a coure fins a quedar reduïts en una pasta espesa. Xopada la mescla que en resulti amb escuma de mar ben revolta, no has de fer altra cosa que fregar-t'hi la boca, els ulls, i totes les parts sensibles, amb voluntat fervorosa; pots estar segura que el teu desig restarà satisfet i el teu amant no estimarà cap altra dona sinó a tu.”

Fou pel novembre, mes en què el diable es disfressa d'ermità. A la dreta, amb un pretext qualsevol, entrà un lladre pel cristall tallat, sense fer soroll. A l'esquerra morien els gals sobre els quals requieien sospites. Arreu ella cobria amb draps negres les finestres. Segueixo. A les esquerdes penetraren les rels de les plantes i les gotes d'aigua guanyaren obs- cures profunditats. Tot inútil. La meva amant seguia agafada a la cua del lleó.

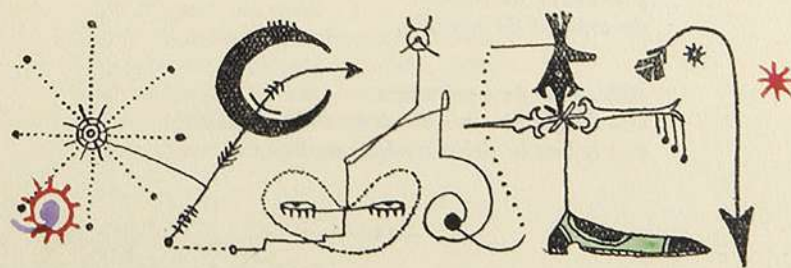
Un dia el sol estarà en relació amb els llençols inundats i hi hau- ran tan poques roses a flor d'aigua, que partirem les canyes perquè no en brotarà ni una.

T'he buscat el cor durant anys i anys. He inclinat el cos a la bondat de la tela. Però poseu-vos el barret; l'experiència és la teoria menys llu- minosa, ha dit un mariner.

Avui un qualsevol es fa expressos les sabates. La meva amant ma- teixa llisca sobre el pergamí, imitant el grall dels cervols. Ai! si jo no fos un rodamón que em lliuro de les bèsties a força de córrer! Què hi fa que ella i jo ajuntem els llavis, si la llengua ens priva de rumiar! Ai! Ai mil vegades!

Li he buscat el cor durant anys i anys. Tot ha influït sobre tot. Si els meus dies favorables són dimarts i dissabte; si entre gener i febrer, l'aire: què em costa de treure-la a ballar!

JOAN BROSSA  
Febrer del 1945



Joan Brossa, ‘*Diàbolo*’, *Dau al Set*, October, 1948.  
Accompanied of vignettes by Joan Ponç

In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs





Joan Brossa

*Bark*, 1943

Paper, paint and wood

13 x 8 x 14,5 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium. Joan Brossa Fund.

Mercè Centellas Deposit. Pepa Llopis Heritage.

© Fundació Joan Brossa, VEGAP, Barcelona

Fotography: Martí Gasull

In front, the one who, driven by the devil,  
knows the secret of all herbs



# The person and the sack

They've taken hold of the sack's mouth as if to tie it shut. They've gripped the higher end of the sack. They've taken a cord and tied the sack. Inside the sack, there is a person. The sack surrounds a person. Since the wrapping has been tied at the ends, the person is completely trapped and cut off. There is no way out for the person hidden inside. The sack is always in plain sight. The sack remains tied; what's more, someone is holding it with both hands. The sack is of a rather coarse kind; it's an ordinary sack. Those who opened the sack and placed a person inside don't think it is wise to abandon it. A hand can be seen sticking out from the sack's mouth; a left hand, through the sack's mouth. But any attempt at escape is impossible. Now they are hiding the sack. Given the sack, they take great precautions around it: it's not empty. No one opens the sack. There's no choice; the only possible route by which the person inside could regain their freedom is through the sack's mouth.

## Conscience

Starting in 1950, his friendship with Brazilian poet and diplomat João Cabral de Melo marked an important shift in Joan Brossa's work. Influenced by Cabral's radical Marxism, his texts at that time took on a clear tone of social commitment and class consciousness. This change, evident not only in the content but in the language, was the result of the application of surrealist techniques and the conviction that avant-garde poets should use colloquial language in their writing. Brossa always defended the poetic effect produced by decontextualising fragments of reality, giving everyday acts the rank of act of great importance, or putting the focus on the smallest and apparently insignificant things. However, this should not lead the poet to lose his social commitment or let his guard down. This is the period of the collection of poems *Em va fer Joan Brossa*, prefaced by Cabral de Melo, and *U no és ningú*, written with a poetic prose that, still with the use of absurd, gets closer to reality and denunciation.

## Liberty

The Spanish Civil War was crucial in Brossa's life. In "La batalla del Segre o la segona naixença", included in the collection of poems *30 Divisió*, dated 1950, the poet recounted how his life was saved when, moments before a mortar exploded in his trench, a voice called his name. Brossa began writing at the front war and never stopped. In fact, he would affirm on several occasions that, if he started all over, he would write again. After having fought on the side of the losers and in an extremely oppressive, hostile and harsh environment of post-war Spain, Brossa always maintained the goal of freedom as an attitude towards creativity and life. He understood writing as a process from the inside out in which one had to always maintain a commitment to oneself above all. Swimming against the current and assuming the risk and the consequences that this entailed in the context of Franco's dictatorship, Brossa firmly upheld his determination to write in Catalan and with



a sense of contemporaneity that saw the need to break with the old-fashion tradition, opposing the understanding of art as ways of expanding the mind and liberation at the service of sensitivity and awakening.



**Em va fer**

**JOAN**

**BROSSA**

**COBALTO**

Joan Brossa

*Joan Brossa Made Me*

Barcelona, Ediciones Cobalto, 1951

But any attempt at escape is impossible





Joan Brossa

*Mister*, 1975 (1982)

Papier–mâché, enamel and metal on wood

15,5 x 29,7 x 35,8 cm

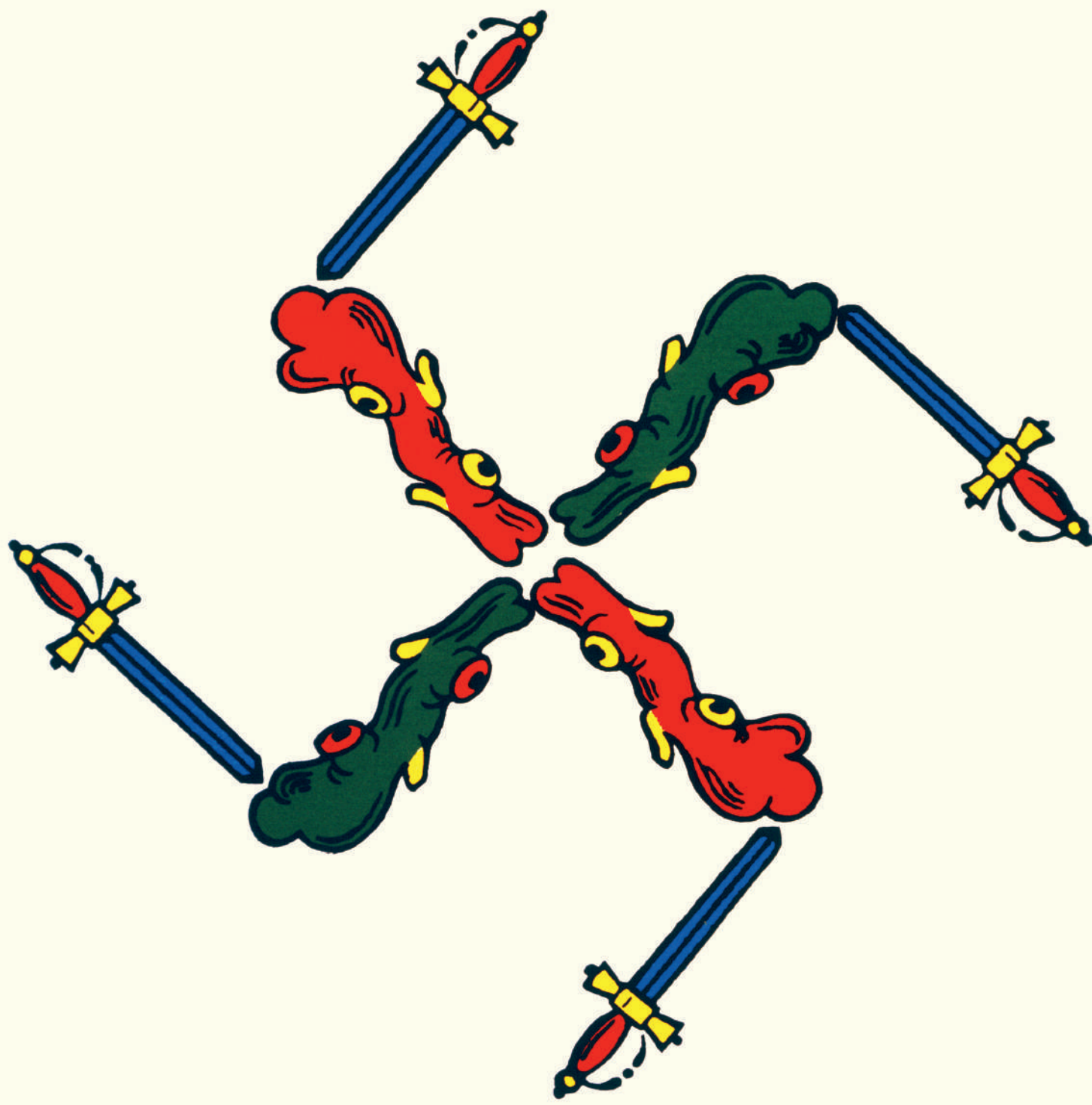
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Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

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Fotography: Martí Gasull





Joan Brossa

*Spain 1975, 1975*

Serigraph on paper

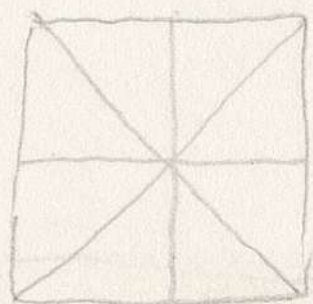
49,5 x 37,8 cm

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RODA ESPANYOLA



76

Joan Brossa

Manuscript for *Spanish Wheel*

In: *Askatasuna*, 1969 – 1970

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# Conference

The title of the conference is of great interest: ‘Cultural Weapons’, and its outline is as follows:

The current, new, generation. — Unforgettable shouts. — Art is an ally in the struggle. — Personal cult. — The artist who feels wounded is a conservative. — The cultural weapons. — Ideology and form. — Draw trees over the photographs.

Class division in our present-day society. — You don’t need to wear torn clothes to understand communism. — In art, we must not abandon the latest achievements in technique. — Man draws closer to man. — For our time. — Decisive forces that shape the character of our time. — Columns of horseshoes. — Dividends and profits. — A stage opening covered with a sheet of newspaper. — The hour rules. — In opposition to the overvaluation of sentiment. — The globe.



## Revolt

Brossa did not understand the creative act without taking a stance, and the artist had to be aware of his craft and commit to the struggle. This combative and rebellious attitude in Brossa is evident not only in many of his literary texts, visual poems and object poems in which he often adopted a sharply ironic language, close to sarcasm, but also in those he cultivated without an artistic purpose, such as prologues, introductions or speeches which were live and scathing. An example of this is the speech for the 1982 Barcelona Floral Games, which he presided over, and that began stating that “The floral games reek of mothballs”. In this type of text, as well as in many of his interviews, Brossa did not hesitate to attack the publishing system, which he labelled as “little covens”, nor to speak out against the art market or the forced intellectualism of certain sectors, that, in his opinion, hid an excess of impotency.

## Essence

To Brossa, the real commitment of a poet to his era was seen in the attitude he adopted towards language: he had to dare to free it from its own limits. He argued that “a poem is an idea whether it is expressed in words or not” and, in this sense, he did not distinguish between a visually artistic poem and a literary one. His poetry, therefore, adopted various formats: from the object poem to habitable poems, visual poetry, literary poetry, scenic poetry and poetic prose. However, he championed visual poetry as the true experimental poetry of the time, a service to communication, “the product of correspondences that result in the surprise of the image or object”. Besides, he considered poetry and theatre to be the true genres of the avant-garde, due to its capability of synthesis, and distanced them from others, such as the novel, which he considered obsolete. While Brossa had always put his poetry at the service of the revolt, this approach brought him closer to conceptual art and new extreme artistic



practices. This made him a role model for the poetic generation of the seventies in Catalonia.

## Fire

One of the main characteristics of Brossa's poetry is its ability to create a feeling of internal turmoil in the reader, through confronting them with perplexity or uncertainty. In addition to crossing the limits of codes and making different forms and genres fluctuate, Brossa dealt with the most diverse topics, using always an informal language that was also rebellious, ironic and provocative. An example of this are the erotic references in texts from the 1940s, in which the poet makes the internal fire burn through highly artistic images: "You kissed me in such a way the carpet was set on fire," or "I can solely say that great love never begin with the pleasure of music" (*Diàbolo*, 1945 and *Les esquerdes s'omplen...*, 1950, published in *Dau al Set*). This also featured in many of his later poems,

in which love and sex are always the result of free union and become a way of liberation, whether about fire (“Axes, fire extinguishers, helmets, pickaxes, and shovels”, *Els ulls i les orelles del poeta*, 1961) or on intimate compliances (“They gently stretched out their thigh and put it between my legs...”, *Cosmogonía*, 1960).





Joan Brossa

*Publishing House*, 1971

Paper, aluminium and chocolate on wood

14,3 x 15,7 x 15,7 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

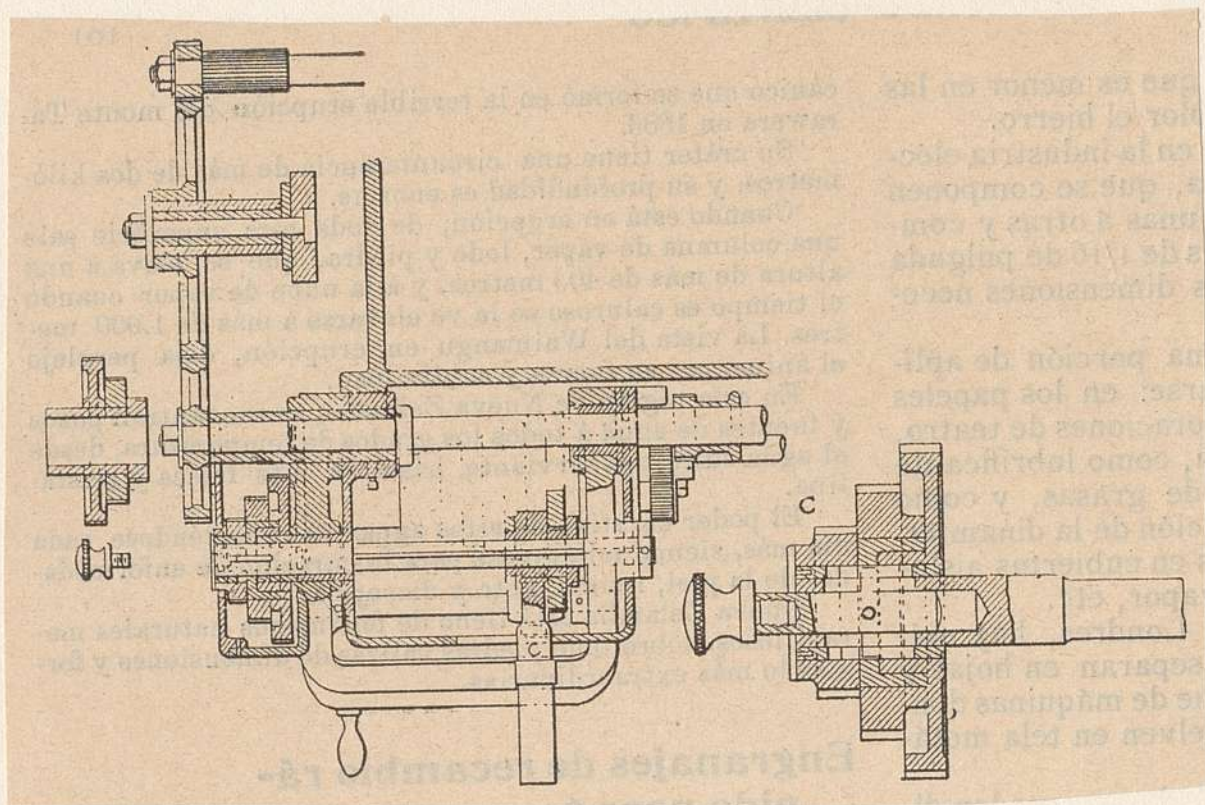
Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

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Fotography: FotoGasull



"C'est en arrêtant nos machines dans  
l'unité que nous démontrons leur faiblesse."



73

Joan Brossa

*Untitled*

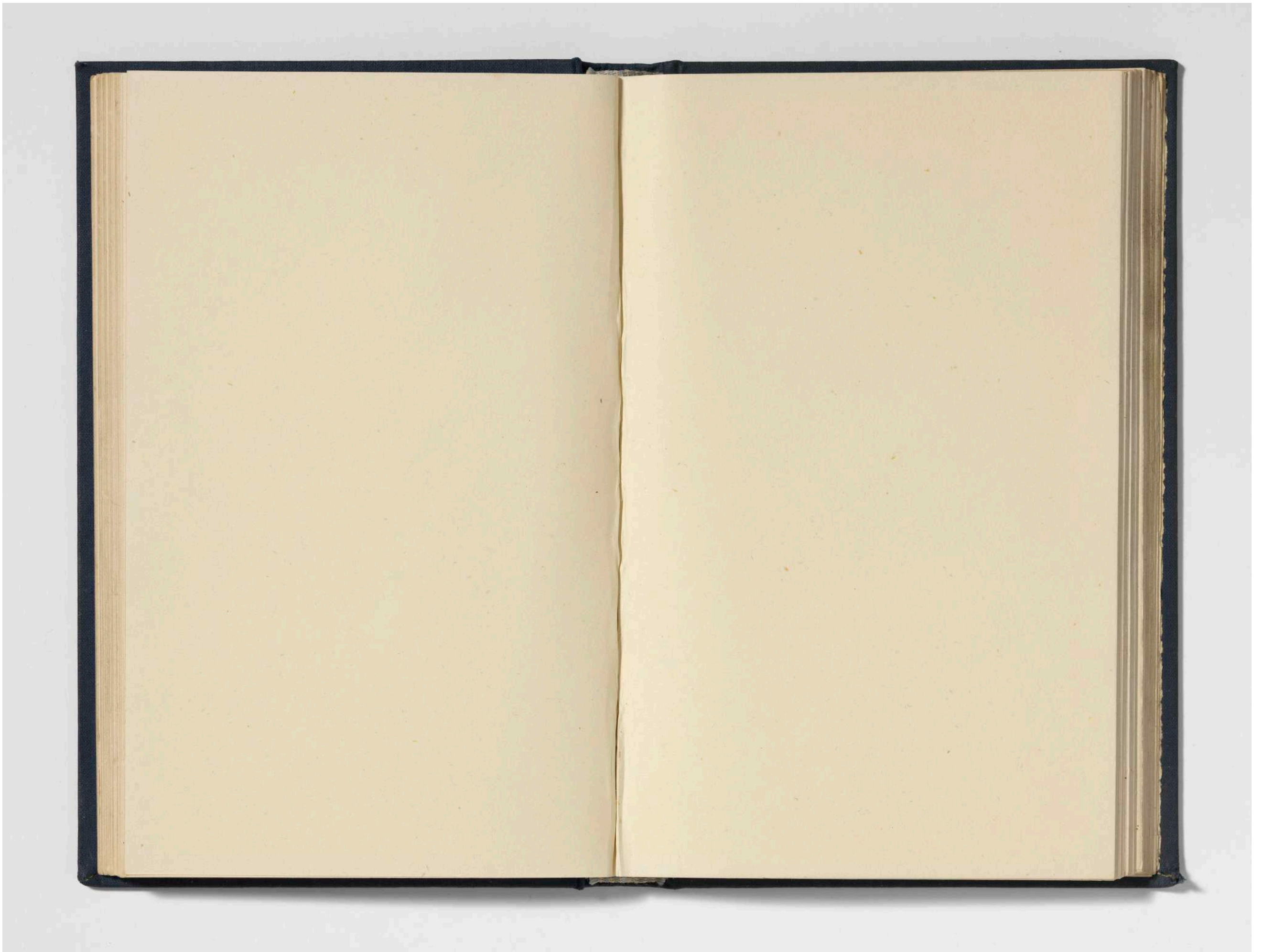
In: *Fora de l'umbracle or Out of the arbor*, 1968

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Joan Brossa

*Novel*, 1969

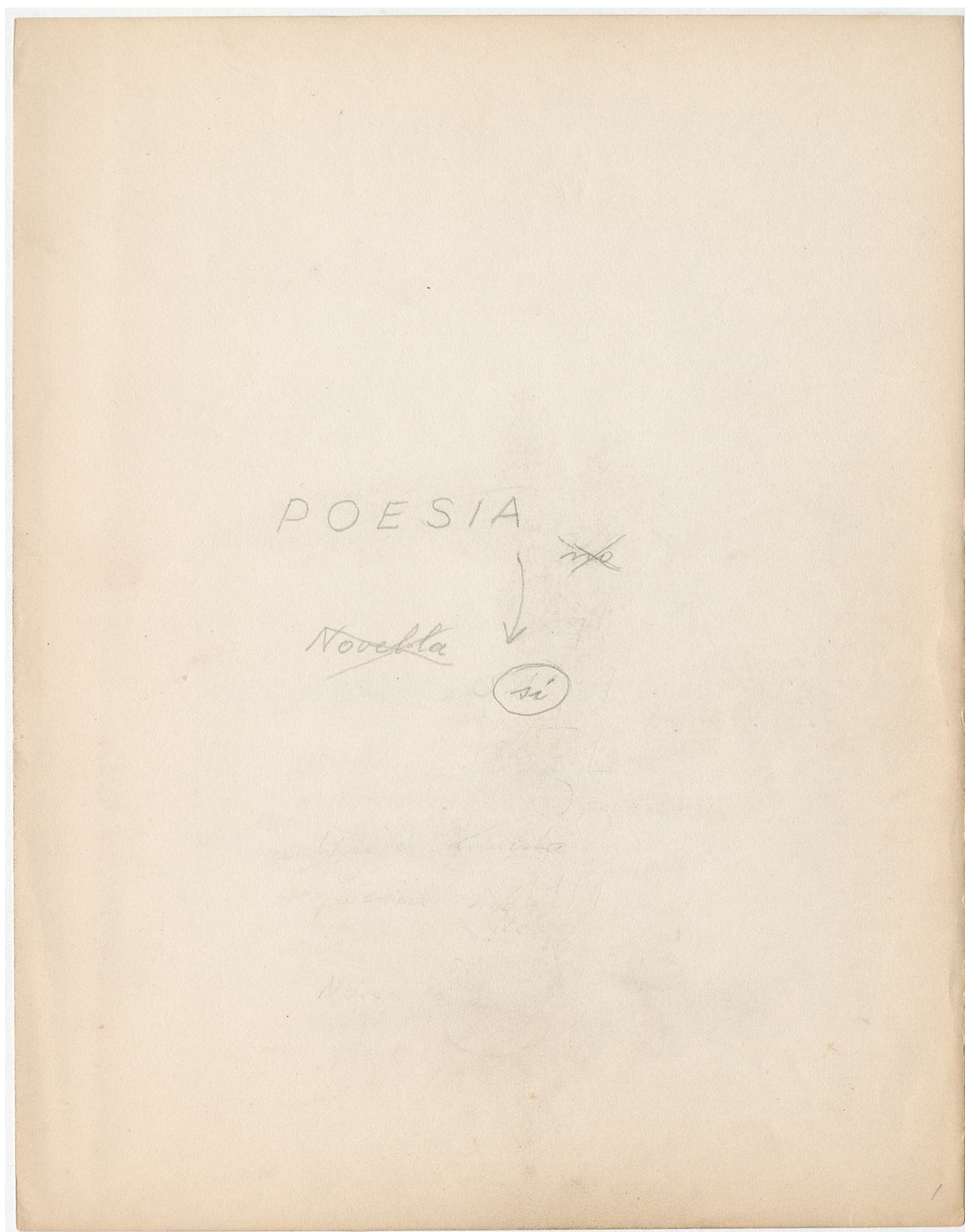
Cloth-bound book

18,8 x 12,2 x 1,8 cm

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Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.





Joan Brossa

*Untitled* (manuscript)

In: *Askatasuna*, 1969 – 1970

MACBA Collection. Centre d'Estudis i Documentació.

Joan Brossa Fund. Barcelona City Council Deposit.

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Joan Brossa

*Object poem*, 1967

Letterset printing on lightbulb

6,5 x 10,5 x 6,5 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

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Fotography: Tony Coll





Joan Brossa

*Nocturnal matinée*, 1969

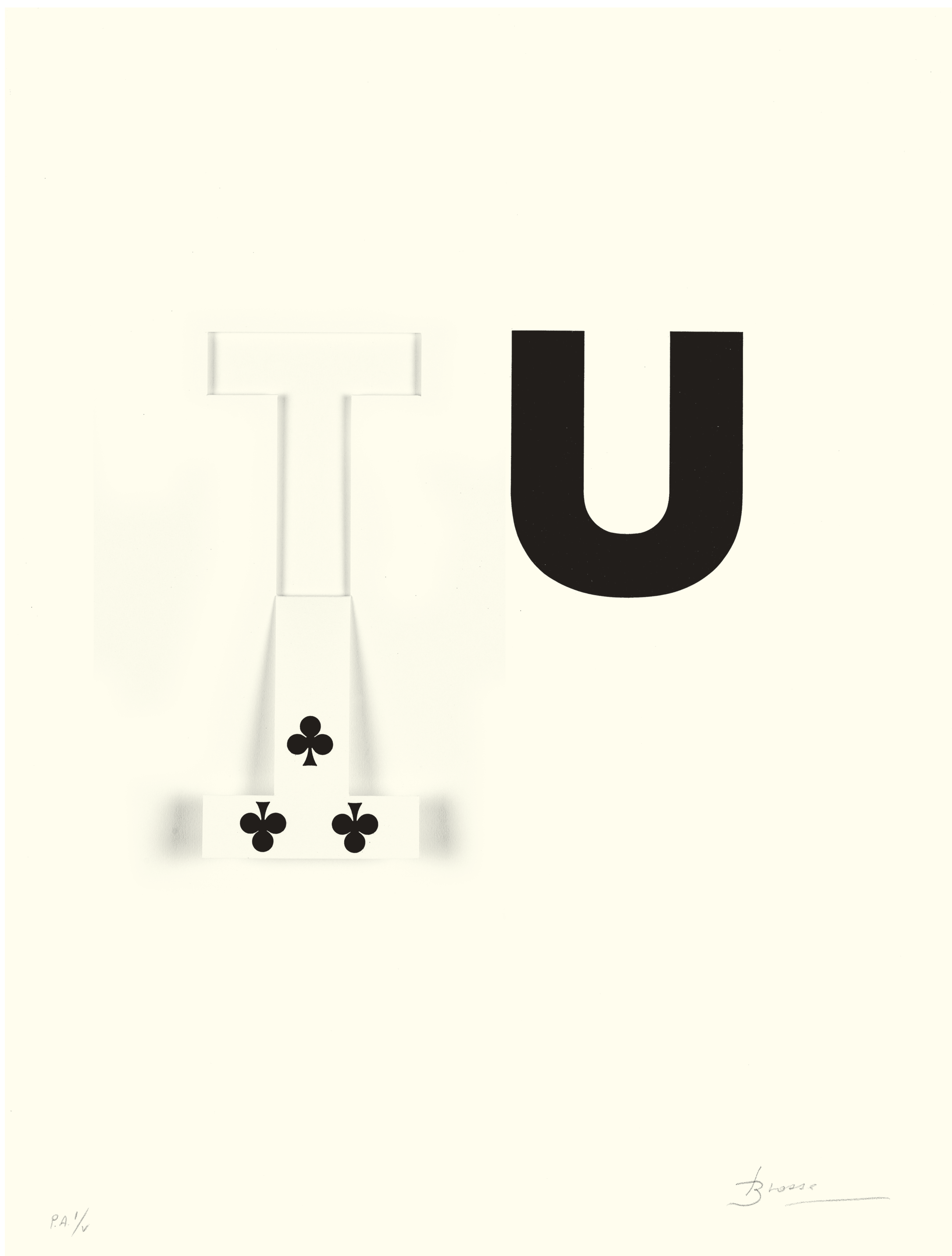
Collage and pencil on paper

17 x 11,1 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.





Joan Brossa,  
*Untitled*, 1988  
48 x 37 cm  
Litography on paper  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.  
Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.

**I have already solved that problem  
of happiness**

**Gnome: I have already solved that problem  
of happiness.**

**Dog: The fruit I receive is the result of my  
own efforts.**

**Gnome: I think the wind is turning.**

**Dog: Oh, really? Then I will travel wrapped in  
its whirlwinds. (He takes off and disappears  
into the heights. The Gnome goes off in his  
own direction).**

***The Beard of Strings or the Pots on the Shield,*  
18th February 1947**



## Silence

Between 1945 and 1968, Brossa wrote a total of 323 plays, a number that exceeds that of his poetry collections. To refer to these texts, he used the term “stage poetry”, a concept that he made sure was strictly differentiated from verse theatre. Brossa became interested in theatre through a desire to give a spatial dimension to poetry, something he found in movement. On the other hand, “performance poetry” allowed a wide range of artistic possibilities to the poem that were impossible in the read text. As a result, we have experimental pieces in which words, action and visuality are mixed. He explained this genesis himself at the premiere of *La pregunta perduda o el corral del lleó*, which took place at Teatre Romea in 1985: “My first works (1944) intended nothing more than letting creative imagination fly, being faithful to the truth that theatrical art cannot exist without poetry”. His theatrical production can be divided into literary theatre -in other words, with text-, and action

theatre, where the dialogues disappear and the simplification of the plot put the focus on the details of the movements. Most of them were never premiered or were made several years later, as is the case with *Quiriquibú, spectacle farsesc en tres parts*, a selection of pieces from various years presented in 1976 at Teatre de l'Aliança del Poblenou in Barcelona with a poster by Joan Miró.

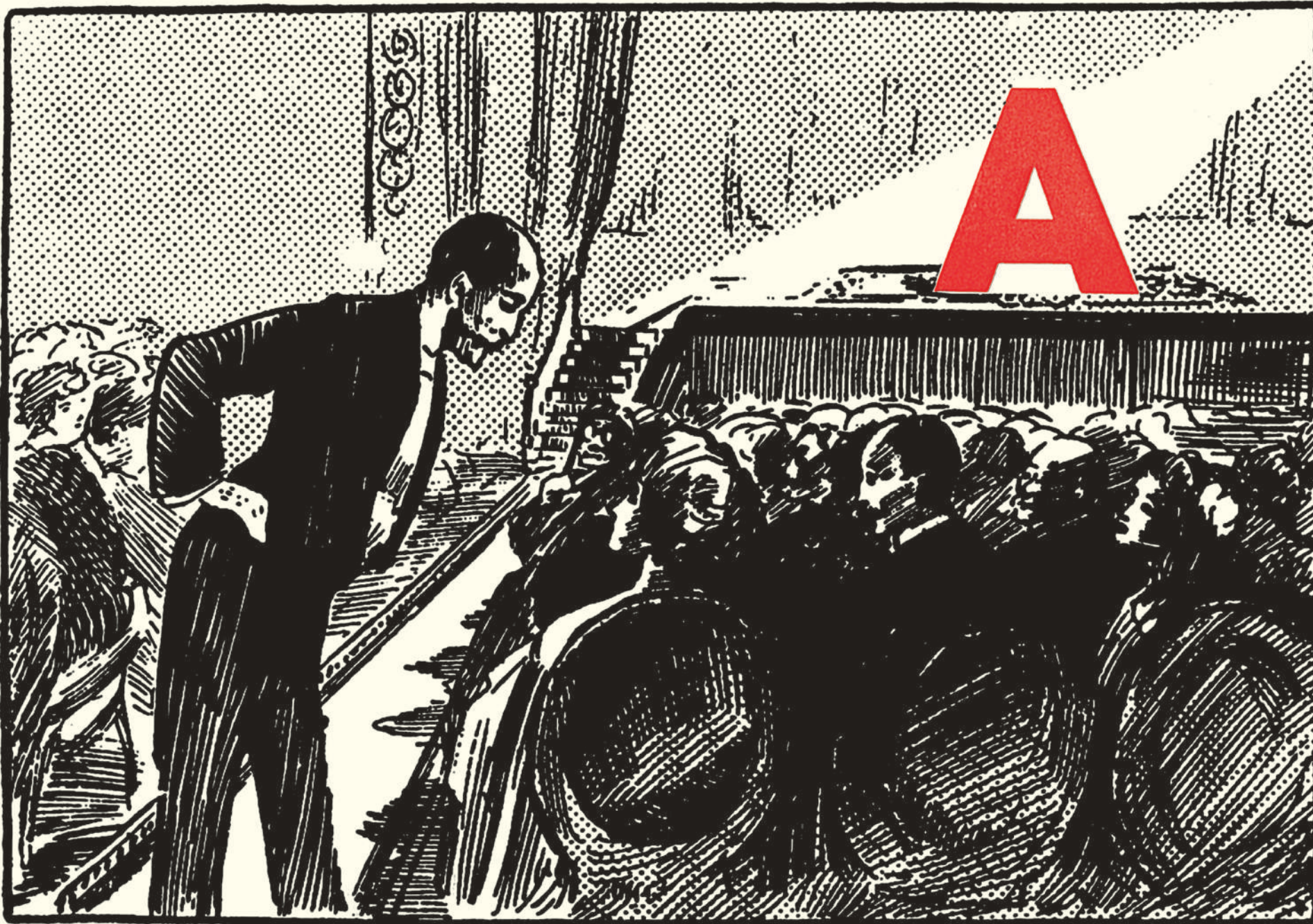
## Theatre

Joan Brossa considered that the origin of theatre was in the carnival and not in literature. The idea of metamorphosis, which he equated to life itself, always attracted Brossa. As he stated, “Art is life, and life is transformation”. In this respect, genres like transformism, illusionism, music hall and striptease, that he always defended due to their lack of text and, therefore, linearity, were directly linked to the idea of mutability. This approach to action theatre is what we find at the base



of what he himself called “post-theatre”, describing a series of texts based on action and experimentation in which the poet questioned the relationship between the scene and the text, also eliminating the border between the stage and the audience. Apart from those strictly theatrical pieces, such as *El cop desert* (1944), considered to be his first play, many of the texts from the 1940s, such as *En entrar*, written the same year, are an approach to this type of theatre of images closer to surrealism that points towards the ‘happening’, in which the poem or the poetic text leaves the door open for anything to happen over the following moments.





7/15

Brossa

Joan Brossa

*Untitled*, 1982

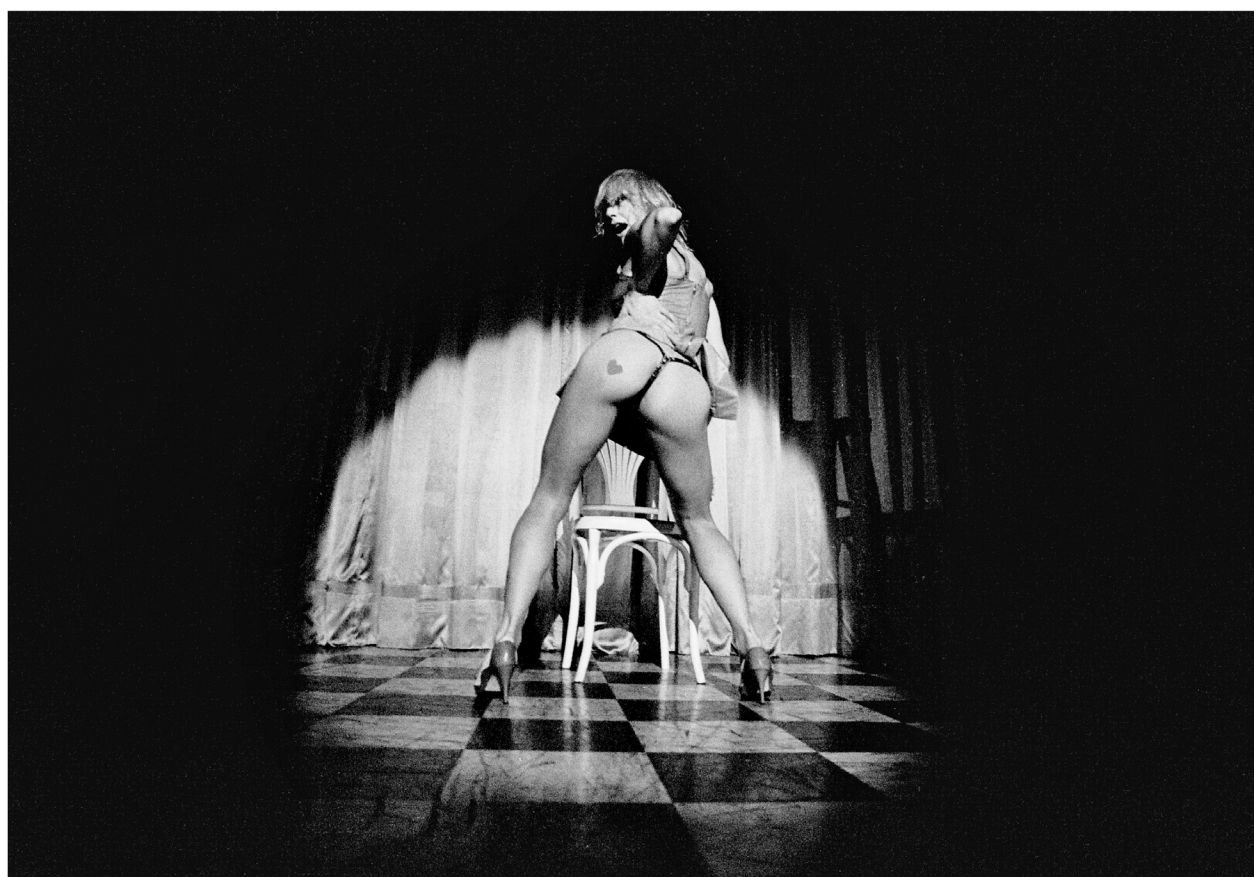
Serigraph on paper

50 x 35 cm

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.





Josep Gol

*Christa Leem*

The stripper Christa Leem performing  
one of her shows, scripted by Joan Brossa  
Tinta Invisible Collection, published in 2005





Joan Brossa

*Untitled*

Serigraph on Super Alfa Guarro paper

49,5 x 37,8 cm

In: *Ollaó*, 1989

MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium.

Joan Brossa Fund. Fundació Joan Brossa Deposit.



The exhibition  
continues

## Astral Summary

Joan Brossa died on the 30th of December 1998. By then, he was finalising the edition of the book *Astral Summary*, a poem divided into three parts in which, as a kind of farewell, Brossa asserted his poetic and life concerns, such as the pursuit of happiness or social critique. Although the poem dates back to the 19th of January 1997—the day he turned 78—*Astral Summary* was published in 1999, shortly after his death at the age of 79.

[Listen here](#)



# Diàbolo

All the natives carry their trays in a suspicious manner. I don't want to witness any more acts of auction disguised as an old man. I will never be able to forget the bird you placed in my hands when I, unhappy, applied secret receptacles to your wooden leg.

Before locking you up in the wardrobe, I lean down, remember? to give you a reptile with the emotion that all of the ancient and indecipherable produces, and before the insistence with which I shout for my servant to quickly get ahead of everything, you promise not to drink again and throw the glass into the sea.

The night was stormy. You kissed me in a way that set the carpet on fire. With great skill, a knife was thrown, splitting the sky into four parts. Hug me. When you move away from me, the furniture in the apartment turns black. When you come closer, the miracle of thirst! In your way of smiling when winter ends, an insect runs. I can't take it anymore; give me some guidelines for acquiring a good piano. Don't try to hide it. We are in the open field.

What do you have in your hand? Your irony bothers my servant so that I always have to excuse you, saying naturally: — 'Ladies... Gentlemen...' — and reminding him that the guillotine trick is performed with two heads.

It was one of those summer days that, if there were too many of them the roulette wheel wouldn't exist. A black cloth bloodied the table. The curtains covering the door were food for molluscs. You arrived alone through the balcony, while I calmly read the mail.

The blaze in your eyes stopped me from ruminating. Now I understand that the clock was doing everything. Why did you say that you couldn't live without me, if when I whispered in your ear that you were beautiful to the point of perfection, you called the police?

But let's forget all that. I'm charmed by danger. Let's forget it with a clean shot. Come: let's walk in the garden; the moon is full and under the willow we can unbury the sticks and the spool of my diabolio.

Some time passed. It is written in the Book of Cleopatra: "FOR A WOMAN TO BE PLEASED



WITH HER LOVER AS SHE WISHES. Take a green frog and cut off its head and legs the first day of the new moon. Put the pieces in elderberry oil. Take them out seven days later, precisely at midnight; once reduced to powder, leave them in a glass cup for twenty-one days so they may receive the influence of the stars. On the twenty-first day, exactly the third of the new moon, you will cook them until they become a thick paste. After soaking the resulting mixture in well-stirred sea foam, do nothing but rub it against your mouth, your eyes, and all your sensitive parts with devouring intent; you can be sure that your desire will be fulfilled, and your lover will love no woman but you.”

It was in November, the month when the devil dresses up as a hermit. On the right, under some pretext, a thief entered silently through the cut glass. On the left, the roosters, suspected of something, were dying. Everywhere, she covered the windows with black cloths. I continue. Through the cracks, plant roots crept in and drops of water reached dark depths. All useless. My lover remained clinging to the lion’s tail.

One day, the sun will align with the soaked sheets and there will be so few roses by the

water's surface, that we'll split the reeds as  
none will bloom.

I have searched for your heart for years and  
years. I have bowed my body to the kindness  
of cloth. But put on your hat; experience is the  
least illuminating theory, said a sailor.

Today, just anyone gets their shoes custom  
made. My lover herself slips over the parchment,  
mimicking the rasp of deer. Ah! if only I weren't  
a wanderer who escapes beasts by running!  
What does it matter if she and I join our lips,  
if our tongue denies us the ability to ruminate?  
Ah! A thousand times ah!

I have searched for her heart for years and years.  
Everything has influenced everything else.  
If my favourable days are Tuesday and Saturday;  
if, between January and February, Taurus:  
what harm is there in asking her to dance!

Joan Brossa  
February 1945



Further listening:

[\*Fogall de sonets\*](#) (1943 – 1948)

Recited by Blanca Llum Vidal

Fundació Joan Brossa, October 2023

[\*Em va fer Joan Brossa\*](#) (1950)

Recited by Oriol Sauleda

Fundació Joan Brossa, October 2023

[\*El saltamartí\*](#) (1963)

Recited by Raquel Pena

Fundació Joan Brossa, October 2023

[\*Selected poems\*](#) from the books *U no és ningú* (1950), *Odes del vell amor* (1951), *El tràngol* (1952), *Cant* (1954), *Un, i no dos* (1959-1969), *Poemes civils* (1960), *Es ulls i les orelles del poeta* (1961), *El saltamartí* (1963), *El cigne i l'oc* (1964), *Petit festival* (1965), *Sonets a Gofredina* (1967), *Calcomanies* (1972), *Cappare* (1973), *Gual permanent* (1977) and *Poemes públics* (1974-1975)

Recited by David Caño, Raquel Pena,

Oriol Sauleda and Blanca Llum Vidal

Fundació Joan Brossa, October-November 2023

Joan Brossa.

The mental feeling of complete happiness

(English)

Both Manchester and Barcelona are UNESCO Cities of Literature, and their cultural exchange vitality becomes apparent in Manchester's role as guest city at La Mercè and at the literary festivals of Barcelona in 2025. Within this context of recognition and collaboration, The University of Manchester is hosting this exhibition on one of Barcelona's most prominent poets, a key figure in 20th century experimental poetry, Joan Brossa. The images on display in this exhibition have been curated by the Joan Brossa Foundation in Barcelona.

Joan Brossa Foundation preserves the Joan Brossa spirit, an experimental Catalan poet focused on conceptual, objectual and visual poetry, as well as in paratheatrical activities. The Foundation hosts an art project under the name of Centre de les arts Lliures (also known



as La Brossa), which produces and exhibits performing, textual and visual arts, always connected with the experimentation and art hybridity. Their main goal is using the arts, heritage and education to revisit established definitions of poetry, theatre and fine arts.

(Catalan)

Tant la ciutat de Manchester com la de Barcelona son Ciutat de la Literatura UNESCO i la vitalitat dels intercanvis culturals entre les dues ciutats es demostra amb la condició de Manchester com a ciutat convidada a La Mercè i als festivals literaris de Barcelona 2025.

En aquest marc de reconeixement i col·laboració, The University of Manchester acull aquesta exposició sobre un dels poetes més destacats de Barcelona, referent pel que fa la poesia experimental del segle XX. L'exposició és una producció de la Fundació Joan Brossa de Barcelona.

La Fundació Joan Brossa preserva l'esperit de Joan Brossa, un poeta català experimental centrat en la poesia visual, objectual i conceptual, així com en activitats parateatral. La Fundació acull un projecte artístic sota el nom de Centre de les Arts Lliures (també conegut com La Brossa), que produeix i exhibeix arts escèniques, textuais i visuals sempre vinculades a l'experimentació i la hibridació artística. L'objectiu principal és treballar per redefinir les definicions establertes de poesia, teatre i belles arts, a través de l'art, el patrimoni i l'educació.

The exhibition is presented in partnership with Creative Manchester and Modern Languages and Cultures at The University of Manchester, Manchester City of Literature, Barcelona City of Literature and the Joan Brossa Foundation.